# WILD SPORT
## AND
# SOME STORIES

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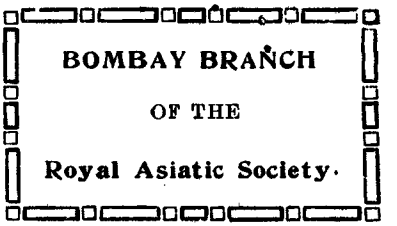
Gilfrid W. Hartley.

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# WILD SPORT

## AND SOME STORIES

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR.*

## WILD SPORT WITH GUN, RIFLE, and SALMON-ROD.

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*"Coming Home."*

# WILD SPORT

## AND SOME STORIES

55327

BY

GILFRID .W. HARTLEY

AUTHOR OF
'WILD SPORT WITH GUN, RIFLE, AND SALMON-ROD'

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

G. D. ARMOUR — Miss C. R. HARTLEY
GUY SPIER — FRED. NOËL PATON
Miss I. M. HARTLEY — STANLEY CURSITER

*AND FROM PHOTOGRAPHS*

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Edinburgh and London
1912

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*TO*

*MY WIFE*

*AND*

*MY FOUR SISTERS*

# PREFACE.

"SAMELA" and "Sir Simon's Courtship" made their first appearance in 'Macmillan'; "An Irish Deer Forest" in 'The Cornhill.' I am greatly indebted to the courtesy of Messrs Macmillan and Messrs Smith, Elder for permission to republish them here.

The other papers—with the exception of "The Handley Cross Novels"—owe their existence to the hospitality extended to them by my old friend the Editor of 'Blackwood,' and I gratefully thank him and the firm he represents for allowing me to reissue them in this form, and for all the help they have given me in their publication.

I should like to repeat what I said in the preface of a former work—that the papers on salmon-fishing and stalking and shooting represent "faithful accounts of actual days' sport."

G. W. H.

# CONTENTS.


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| A FIFTY-TWO POUND SALMON . . . . | 1 |
| SOME BIG LOST NORWAY-SALMON . . . | 25 |
| SNIPE-SHOOTING— | |
| I. SNIPE-SHOOTING IN THE WEST OF IRELAND . | 53 |
| II. SNIPE AND WILDFOWL SHOOTING IN THE WEST OF IRELAND . . . . . | 80 |
| AN IRISH DEER FOREST . . . . . | 101 |
| MEDITATIONS IN A DEER-FOREST . . . | 122 |
| TALES OF A FOREST . . . . . | 144 |
| AN OLD SALMON-POACHING STORY . . . | 162 |
| SIR SIMON'S COURTSHIP . . . . . | 186 |
| SAMELA—A TRAGEDY IN THE LIFE OF A BOOK-HUNTER . | 230 |
| THE HANDLEY CROSS NOVELS . . . . | 302 |

# ILLUSTRATIONS.

## COLOURED BLOCKS.


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| "COMING HOME" . . . . . *Frontispiece*<br>*From a water-colour by G. D. Armour.* | |
| THE PASS OF BRANDER (LOOKING WEST) . . . . | 162<br>*From a sketch by Fred. Noël Paton.* |
| BEN CRUACHAN . . . . . | 184<br>*From a sketch by Miss I. M. Hartley.* |


## HALF-TONE BLOCKS.


| | |
|---|---|
| A 52-LB. SALMON . . . . . | 1 |
| MONS GJÖRVEN AND THE BIG SALMON . . . . | 2 |
| NEARING THE END. . . . . | 16 |
| MONS GJÖRVEN, SIVERT STÖRVEIDE, MATTIAS SAETRE—THREE MOST SKILFUL NORWAY GAFFERS . . . | 20 |
| "PLATFORM" POOL—STRYN RIVER, NORWAY . . . | 22 |
| "PLATFORM" POOL—STRYN RIVER, NORWAY . . .<br>*From an original sketch by G. E. Lodge.* | 26 |
| "WILL HE COME?" . . . . . | 30 |
| "SAFE!" . . . . . | 32 |
| ANNA SVARSTAD—AN ADMIRABLE HOUSEKEEPER . . | 36 |
| THE LAKE ABOVE THE STRYN . . . . . | 42 |
| A NORWEGIAN SALMON-TRAP . . . . . | 46 |
| JULY 1905—38 LB.; 16 LB.; 14 LB.; 12 LB. . . . | 48 |

JULY 1903—34 LB.; 17 LB.; 11 LB. . . . . 48
A 48½-LB. FISH FROM THE FAIRBURN WATER, RIVER CONON, ROSS-SHIRE . . . . . 52
"WELL MARKED!" . . . . . 54
AN IRISH SNIPE-BOG . . . . . 70
BISHOP'S ISLAND, COAST OF CLARE, AN INACCESSIBLE HAUNT OF WHITE-FRONTED GEESE . . . . . 70
*J. Bothwell, Kilkee.*
"MARK THAT BIRD!" . . . . . 74
THE MARCH OF THE SNIPE-GROUND, ATLANTIC COAST OF CLARE . . . . . 80
*J. Bothwell, Kilkee.*
JOHN DILLON, "SPORTSMAN" . . . . . 86
WILLIAM HALL, OUR FACTOTUM . . . . . 86
CONNOR O'BRIEN, "SPORTSMAN" . . . . . 86
JOSEPH COLEMAN, A CLARE KEEPER . . . . . 86
PATRICK HALLORAN, A FAMOUS PROFESSIONAL SNIPE-SHOT 88
WHITE-FRONTED GEESE . . . . . 92
WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE . . . . . 96
*From a sketch bought in Japan.*
"ACROSS THE MOON" . . . . . 100
A GOOD 15-POINTER—WEIGHT 20 ST. 4 LB. . . . 102
THE 15-POINTER . . . . . 102
AN IRISH GARDEN—GLENVEAGH CASTLE, DONEGAL . . 104
THREE FINE STAGS—24 ST. 12 LB.; 18 ST.; 19 ST. . . 106
OFF HOME AFTER THE GOOSE-HUNT . . . . . 108
MHAIRI THE TRACKER AND THE 25-ST. STAG . . . 108
GLENVEAGH CASTLE, CO. DONEGAL . . . . . 110
GLENVEAGH FOREST, TOP OF POISONED GLEN . . . 110
WHOOPER SWAN AND TUFTED DUCK . . . . . 112
A 10-POINTER, 36-INCH SPAN . . . . . 114
A 10-POINTER, 36-INCH SPAN . . . . . 114
A 13-POINTER—WEIGHT 24 ST. 12 LB. . . . . 116
THE 13-POINTER—BACK VIEW OF SKULL . . . . 116
DONALD MACDONALD. ALISTAIR MACDONELL . . . 118

15-POINTER—WEIGHT 20 ST. 4 LB. . . . . 118
JAMES BRADY, JOHN MACLENNAN (LATE HEAD STALKER), JOHN ORR, ALISTAIR MACDONELL (SECOND STALKER) . 120
AN OFF-DAY. STALKERS AND BEATERS IN THE WARREN . 120
CORRIEHALLIE LODGE, ROSS-SHIRE . . . . . 122
*From a sketch by Miss C. R. Hartley.*
PREHISTORIC (?) HORN OF RED DEER FOUND BURIED IN SAND ON AN ISLAND OFF THE WEST COAST OF DONEGAL . . . . . 126
ALMOST PERFECT SKELETON OF RED DEER FOUND ABOUT 1830 WHEN ENLARGING A LAKE AT SMEATON-HEPBURN, EAST LOTHIAN. ASSOCIATED WITH BONES OF "BOS PRIMIGENIUS" . . . . . 128
A FINE OLD STALKER, FARQUHAR MACPHAIL OF MONAR . 130
EAST LODGE, MONAR DEER FOREST—STALKERS, GILLIES, AND RIFLES . . . . . 132
LOOKING WEST FROM STRATHMORE LODGE, MONAR FOREST 143
THE LIBRARIAN . . . . . 186
SAMELA . . . . . 230
*From a drawing by Stanley Cursiter.*

## LINE BLOCKS.

"TRY ANOTHER ONE" . . . . . 6
"JIGGING" . . . . . 10
GAFFING A SALMON . . . . . 13
GETTING NEAR . . . . . 102
THE SHOT . . . . . 104
BEFORE THE GRALLOCH . . . . . 106
"HE'S NO BA-AD" . . . . . 145
"HAS HE GOT THE WIND?" . . . . . 147

*A 52-lb. Salmon.*

# WILD SPORT

## AND SOME STORIES.

### A FIFTY-TWO POUND SALMON.

ONE wet July morning a man stood waist-deep in a Norwegian river, holding on to a very heavy salmon, which sullenly rolled and plunged some sixty yards below him : he was hot and wet and somewhat breathless. By his side stood another man, cooler, because much wetter than his master, for he had been in far over his high wading-breeches, and all the space in those garments which was not occupied by his substantial body was filled with water. The gaffer was, as usual, calm and collected, and hopeful if not confident ; while his companion's mind was filled with forebodings and anticipations of evils to come. The pair stood well out in a strong stream : they had just arrived, after a very hurried journey, at the end of a gravelly spit, beyond which it was impossible to go without the help of a boat. After a few

moments' consideration the gaffer got ashore, and then made the best of an uncomfortable way across a deep side-stream, through which he almost had to swim, in search of the boat, and the other was left to his own devices.

A good many years ago the writer of this paper was fortunate enough to kill a 40-lb. salmon, with fly, in a Scotch river. Then, long after, the Fates put almost into his very hands a much greater gift, and when the eager hands were just closing on it they ruthlessly snatched it away. This second fish had taken its temporary owner a mile down a Norway river: its strength was all but exhausted: it could be seen, was seen, for minutes at a time in the clear green water—its fins, its markings, the cast leading to its mouth, perfectly plain and distinct. But when all danger seemed over, and nothing was left but to gently tow the huge hulk into an ideal landing-place, the worn tackle parted, and a great prize was lost for ever. It may be that the fisherman's rejoicings at the first capture were too loud and immodest, that he took too much credit to himself for what he had accomplished, and therefore he was punished; and if this was the case, it is permissible perhaps to suggest that the cruel chastening which he received on this second occasion was borne with a fitting amount of meekness, more in utter dejection and grief than with furious denunciation, because two

*Mons Gjörven and the big Salmon.*

short years later the memory of the lost salmon became bearable, and a new joy took the place of the old deep sorrow.

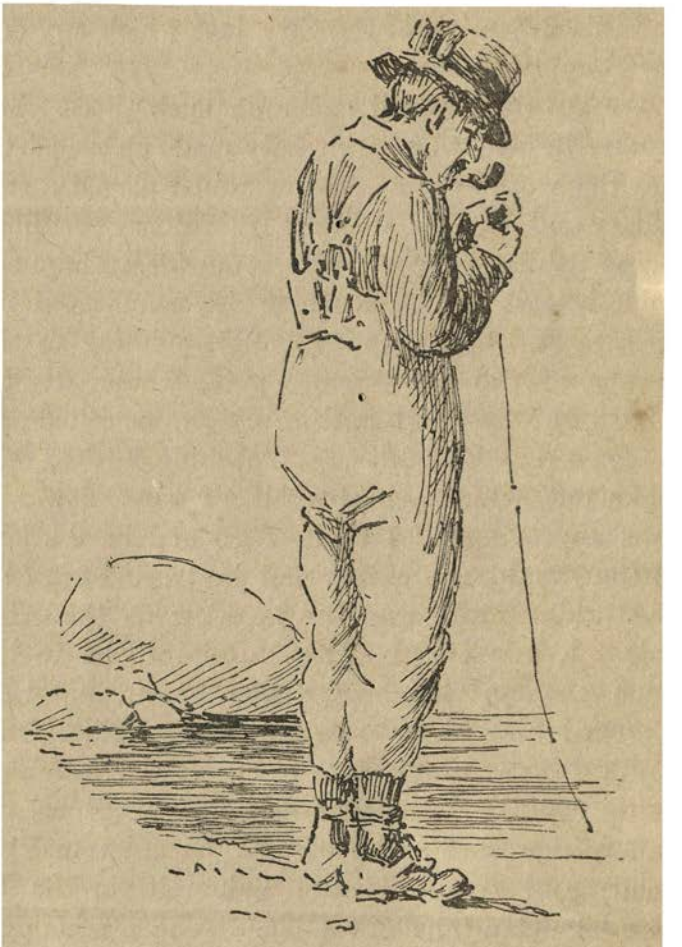
The July of 1905 saw for the third time a small party take up its abode in a pretty lodge on a Norway river. Our arrival there had now no strangeness about it: it seemed like coming home. We met on the pier our three gaffers, and saw many other friendly faces: only the river seemed inhospitable, rushing seaward in a green flood such as we had never known before. The snowfall in the winter and early spring had been very heavy, and June very hot; so a long-lasting spate, which was a record for ten years, and perhaps much longer, was the result. This flood did us harm, not only because of its bulk of water, which made many pools useless, but also from what it brought down in more solid matter,—in sodden logs and sticks which successfully defended some places from our attacks, and also in suspended material from the glacier, which later on thickened the water and made the fish sick and disinclined to pay attention to us, no matter how assiduously we wooed them. Only certain places were then worth fishing: on a Monday you were on the upper water, and tolerably sure of killing, or at any rate of losing, fish. But you knew that on the two lower beats where you would be for the next two days, your friends had but a poor chance

of doing anything. This upper water gave four fish in a night, and three, and two more than once, when little or nothing was done down below.

We did not get our fish without hard work, sometimes very hard work; and what was much worse, we did not sometimes lose them without very hard work indeed. A rise of a few inches in a pool will often make all the difference between that pool fishing properly or not; and a rise which may be reckoned in feet exercises a most extraordinary effect on the habits of salmon. They fight with a twenty-fold vigour for their lives, and perform feats which they never think of attempting when hooked in quiet places. From some pools it was a certainty that fish would go down, generally very quickly; and, especially late at night, there was something exceedingly hopeless and inhospitable-looking in the raging, racing water, which, devoid it seemed of all resting-places, lay below. Those who do not know the river and the difference which a good rise in the water makes, find it difficult to realise that the playing a fish, which is easy and almost commonplace at ordinary times, becomes very difficult and risky in a flood. The 20- or 30-pounder in low or medium water is a docile and easily-managed creature. If he does go down a pool or two, he travels like a reasonable being; give him an extra one, or two, or even four feet of water,

and this adjective is the very last which any one would apply to him.

We suffered, as all suffer at such times. My brother-in-law, who with a lady made up the party, had the worst run of the lot, and I played a secondary and, I think, a very extraordinary part in it. I was fishing near a bridge some fifteen minutes' walk below the place where he commenced his operations. Suddenly my gaffer, pointing to the middle of the big swirling pool, whose extreme edge only was worth putting a fly over, called out, "That's very like a fish." Watching, I could only make out what seemed a bit of wood now and then appearing. "I think I go and have a look at that," said the gaffer, and he trotted off, over the bridge and down the meadow on the other side. I, less sharp-sighted and inclined to the stick theory, made a few more casts and then followed him in case he should be right. Once again I saw the object, more like a fish now, going rapidly down towards a point. Mons, the gaffer, was well ahead of me: he got round the point, and some distance below it, in the lea of a big island, he saw a large salmon seemingly in sore trouble. First his head showed and then his tail: he was making frantic struggles: he seemed to be partially anchored in the comparatively quiet water. Then Mons ran like a hare some hundreds of yards down the river to where a



*"Try another one."*

boat lay. To shorten a long story, we saw no more of the fish. We followed on, by the boats which were on most of the pools, or on our own

legs, cut off a bend in the river to get below him, and have a chance of gaffing him, or more likely of getting hold of the end of the line with which he was encumbered. But nothing more of fish or line was ever seen. So we knew, before any one had told us of it, that a catastrophe had happened to one of the rods above, and what had happened was this. In a big turbulent pool W. had hooked a salmon, which went down the swollen river at a great pace, and eventually, after a long run, reached a place where it was impossible to follow him. Here he got out all the 160 yards of line and broke it at the reel. And this was the fish, encumbered with this line and the spoon and leads, which we had seen making out his course in such a strange fashion some two hundred yards below: only a sharp bend in the river prevented us witnessing the catastrophe itself. It was impossible for W. to follow farther, owing to the bank and the wood on it, and he had to break: great credit should be given to any one who arrived here after such a run, alive, and still attached to his fish. A burst of this kind is by far the most trying experience a man can have—only comparable to that after a wounded stag; but then there you go at your own pace, here at the salmon's. To hold on to a heavy fish travelling at great speed in big water is, if the ground is bad, a most exhausting business, and after a time there is little pleasure

in it. Of course, if you have open water or pleasant meadows to run over, it is a different business altogether. Mons saw the fish clearly enough to be able to say he was a very big one. We hoped he might be traced, captured in a net or a trap, and identified by something he had about him; but he passed away, like most lost salmon, into total obscurity.

Then the lady's gaffer had a very sharp run after a 16-pounder, which she had foul-hooked, and, knowing the country which lay below her, wisely handed over to him. Finally I, not to be beaten, had a quite short but most exhausting journey after a seemingly good fish, which got out more line than he ought to have done, and then wound himself round a stone in the first pool he came to. It was pretty to see the attempt which was made by the men who happened to be at the pool when he arrived, to save this fish. In a few seconds Sivert was over the wire rope to the opposite shore, with the line of another rod fastened on to mine as near the cast as might be, while Mattias was some way down the stream on our side with yet a third line also hooked on to mine. They worked my tackle free, but the fish got off. One result of these rapid traverses was invariably a sharp fit of coughing, quite uncontrollable, but most irritating to calm and comfortable people who had not been engaged in

the chase. An active schoolboy in first-rate football training would be "the man" for this sort of work, but then he wouldn't know much about the rod part of it. I have dwelt a little on these runs and their effects, because I think they are difficult to be understood by fishermen at home. For my part, *I* never remember to have been really exhausted, quite blown and done, on any river in Scotland; no doubt chiefly because in a big spate our salmon do not take fly or spoon: they cannot see the lures in the thick dark flood; but in Norway you *may* have a rise of even four or five feet, and yet the water remains perfectly clear. Spate or not, we hardly ever did any good when there was sunshine.

For a week a 30-pounder of W.'s was the best fish. Then the lady of the party got a 38. The capture of this splendid salmon would have been most creditable to any man or woman. She hooked it from a boat, and as her gaffer had to row he could give her no assistance whatever; so for an hour she was towed about a big pool, and both arms and shoulders were weary enough by the time she landed for the finish. I have written before of the nice judgment as to weight which these Norwegian gaffers possess. In this case a bet was made, and ten kroners staked, that the salmon was 40 lb.: the bet was lost by those 2 lb. But if the capture had come off a few days earlier the stakes

would have gone into a different pocket. This would have been the heaviest fish of the forty-five we killed had it not been for one other, as to which a history is now being given.

It was in a small pool, only worth fishing when

*"Jigging."*

the river was high, that I hooked the heaviest salmon I can ever expect to have to do with. This pool was that day on the lady's beat, but it was too deep to get at without wading-trousers,

so she resigned it to me and took in exchange some of my water. Fly gave no result, and a large single prawn was the attraction.

Immediately after hooking the fish we crossed a narrow side-stream by deep wading, and were then on a large triangular flooded island, bordered by the river on two sides and this cut on the third. For a few minutes the salmon stopped in the pool, and did not seem likely to give much trouble: then he slowly crossed over the strong stream, right to the other side of the river, and went steadily down. Some hundred and fifty yards below was a "ness," or point. A hundred yards below this was a long, thickly-wooded island, with the main river on the far side of it, and a narrow branch, perhaps thirty yards wide, on ours. It was obvious that a fish going down outside the island must be hopelessly lost. The boat belonging to the ness was that day not at its place: it had been taken down the river in the hunt after the big lost salmon already related. Our fish wanted to go down the wider reach, but the strong stream at the point helped me to swing him in, and as he travelled at a reasonable pace I was able to wind in a lot of line and be almost abreast of him when at the critical place, and I made up my mind that here I would make no mistake, and not have afterwards to reproach myself with any timidity in handling him. It

was better, far better, to run the greatest risk of breaking, to put on every ounce the tackle would hold, to turn him in to our side: to break him *there* if it had to be done, rather than see him go outside that island, unfollowable and hopelessly lost. At that dividing line we had some very anxious moments: then the heavy strain and the strong stream combined decided him to take the narrow passage, and so far we were safe.

Up to this time neither my gaffer nor myself had any idea that we had to do with more than a good fish,—he might be 20 lb. or 30 lb.,—but the next few moments were to tell us a great deal more. Mons was ahead of me: the salmon, probably a little bewildered and for the time winded by the strong pressure suddenly put upon him, swinging round, came well in to our side. There seemed a chance of bringing him in still closer, perhaps within reach of the gaff, and I put still more strain on him, and in a small bit of quiet water he turned his head up-stream and did come in. If I had known then what I knew a second or two later I would never have dared to attempt this, or take the slightest liberty. I saw Mons bury his six-foot gaff very deep in the water, and strike. There was a moment's "hang," and then he lifted out on to the flooded bank—there was about a foot of water running on it—the largest salmon I have ever seen alive. There was a frantic

splashing, the lashing about of an enormous tail: I saw the hold give: I had time—a long time it seemed to me—to realise that he was off, to see Mons strike again, and then the mass of blue and brown and silver disappeared, and I felt the rod top dragged into the water and the line going off

*Gaffing a salmon.*

the reel as if there was a mastiff at the end of it Not the slightest blame attached to Mons for this semi-catastrophe: the chance was the poorest of the poor: the depth of the water, the just momentary glimpse of the fish and its weight,

were odds too great for any one however skilful. He had the fish by almost the extreme end of the tail and could not raise it high enough, and the purchase given it by the water in a moment forced out the hold. His second shot was delivered, as it chanced, with the hook upwards: he had no time to change his hold, and the steel slid harmlessly over the back. Had the hook of the gaff been reversed, I have no doubt our fight would have been finished then. In those few seconds I think we both lived a day.

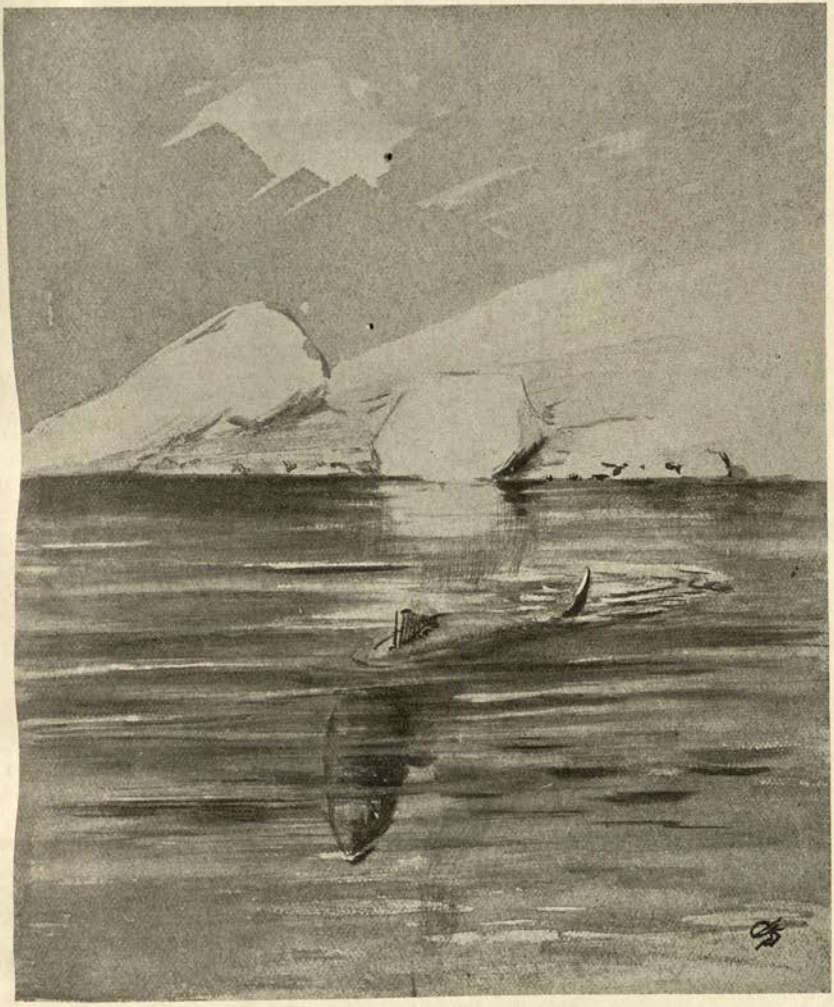
The salmon had not been on for more than ten or twelve minutes, and, of course, his strength was hardly at all abated. Outraged at this treatment — alarmed probably beyond expression at being so dragged out of his element — when he got back to the river he started on a desperate struggle for freedom. He took out a hundred yards of line in that first burst, or perhaps more; and when I looked down the swollen river, guarded by high trees, and thought of all the risks which must be run before I got within measurable distance of the fish again, I felt the odds were greatly against us, and that most likely we should have nothing else but another tale of calamity to tell when we got home.

There seemed to be something particularly desolate, and almost forbidding, in our surroundings as we followed on the fish. On the right

ran the swollen river; on our left side lay the flooded woodlands, here and there bisected with deep cuts. All the trees stood out of water, and overhung in many places the river proper to an extent which made it difficult to get past without wading too deep. It was raining heavily, and a feeling of hopelessness, which I have very seldom experienced, came over my mind. The size, now more or less known, of the fish, the present difficulties of trees and water, the obvious dangers two or three hundred yards below, made me at any rate feel that the odds were against us, and that we were going to be partakers in a repetition of the disaster of two years ago. Later on, at the crisis of the lower island, still to be related,—and in an uneventful life I consider it to have been a crisis,—I felt that loss then would be a calamity to me difficult to bear: the second chance of a lifetime gone. It was easy to picture the catastrophe—the sudden flying straight of the heavily bent rod, the end to hope: the weary starting again: to try perhaps for years and years, and never to have such another opportunity. I thought that mine was going only to be a tale that is told, like that of Bromley-Davenport's, also in Norway, who, after landing a 43-lb. salmon, hooked and played for a long time another so big that even the apathetic Ole declared that the first was only like a small piece of the second.

Then, through that Ole's fault, the fish got off, and the sun went in for the narrator for many a day. I thought—later on I had plenty of time for self-communion—of the account given by the Bishop of Bristol, of the great salmon he played for many hours on a late autumn night in the estuary of the Tay, and also lost, "and neither he nor the boatman will ever get over it." Amongst all the narratives connected with fish I have read, these two stand out far above any others in graphic clearness and power.

Down this part of the river I had never been —it led to no pool: we kept always outside the tree-covered triangle, and its risks from wood and heavy water were exaggerated by the state of the river. The first ditch had to be got over immediately, and that I did get over it with the fish still on was solely and entirely due to my gaffer. He knew the place—was standing in it all but up to his neck before I arrived. He gave me, just at the right moment, just the amount of support and lift I required: I seemed to go for two or three steps without touching the bottom, and then, somehow, was safe across it, wondering as I stood again in only a couple of feet of water how it was done. Now and then I wound up a little; often I had to get deep into the river to avoid far outstretching trees; many a time did Mons guide the line, and slip it over dangerous



*Nearing the end.*

branches. Round one especially awkward place I handed him my rod, thankful to get a little breathing-time, and when I got back to him he was standing as far out as he could go, at the end of the gravelly spit first mentioned, winding steadily up, the fish then inclined to stop its headlong career, but seemingly wanting to get dangerously near another flooded island covered with scrub, which was almost directly below us.

So I got hold of the rod again, and Mons crossed the deep side-stream, as I have related at the beginning of this account, to the mainland proper, where the boat lay. Farther down I could not move,—not a single yard. There was a very strong stream on the far side of the river, a heavy backwater on ours: if the fish could be kept in the latter haven, we might yet do well: if he got into the stream and chose to follow it, swirling and tumbling, Laxigar was the next possible resting-place, and passing into that pool he must break me, long though my line was. On a Scotch or English river 120 yards of line is a common length to have on a reel,—it is seldom that more is wanted. I never remember, during thirty years' fishing, to have been run quite bare, and there might be some affectation in carrying double this quantity. But, as I have said, as fish take in clear Norway streams when they are very big, so they show

much greater fight, and it is both a necessity sometimes, and an exceedingly great comfort always, to know that you are even superabundantly supplied. I had 200 yards of good backing, and 80 yards of spinning-line on my big Malloch, yet here was a case when I might easily want it all, and that all be not enough.

So Mons had to get the boat up to me, more speedily than was possible, and I had to hold the fish where he was—if I could. "If he goes down he will break me," I said. "I will be quick back," replied Mons quite cheerfully, "and you will keep him here." His progress to the mainland seemed to be painfully slow: he waded deeply in, then for a few yards he seemed to be swimming, though he said he had not to do that. Then I lost sight of him for a little: then he got to the boat. The boat was half full of water: it seemed to take an immense time to dash it out with the flat bailer, and yet I knew he was working as hard as a man could.

Meanwhile, in water as deep as I could stand, I held on to the fish as hard as I dared. With some 60 or 80 yards of line out he would make a heavy lunge streamwards, and my heart was in my mouth. (For I knew that if he once *did* get properly into that heavy current, and mean to go with it, nothing could stop him: a few seconds would end the fight then.) By turning the rod

well into my side I brought him back from his little excursion. Before I had time to rejoice he was off again, and again the same manœuvre checked him. Many times he made these half-hearted attempts. I had had my spinning-line oiled that morning, to make it run out better, and bitterly did I regret this, for I could get no hold on it with my finger, and had to rely solely on pressure on the drum of the Malloch. "Would he wait? Surely Mons must be here now! Would he be fool enough to wait?"

Mons arrived, hot as to face, wet as to body, mentally perfectly cool and unflurried. He worked the boat up to me. Now the odds were veering round, we could follow him now! "If he goes into Laxigar we can follow!" "I like it not," said Mons, looking at the rough water below, "but we will try." I got into the friendly boat, feeling more confident, but knowing how far, how *very* far, success might still be from us. After some five minutes of give and take I was rowed to the mainland, and then, after further anxious deliberation, I cautiously climbed up a steep bank, and for the first time during the hunt stood on dry land. The landing-place was just the length of the boat, with rough scrub and bushes on either side. Now the time was approaching: for good or bad the crisis was close at hand—happiness and triumph, or great, and not alto-

gether temporary, misery, hung in the balance. I wish I could make those who do me the honour of reading this account feel the responsibility and consuming interest of the next few minutes. Long ago we had realised that the salmon was a very large one: rapid though the survey at the first gaffing place had been, we had seen enough to know that we had in charge no ordinary prize. And now there could be no possible question,—he was losing strength, coming up often to the surface, flapping his huge tail, and turning over in the weary despairing way in which fish move when they are being tired out. "He's far over 40 lb.!" I said, and Mons agreed so readily and quickly that I knew there could be no doubt in his mind. Then came a bit of comfort from the gaffer. "I think he very well hooked," he said, as the fish, turning over, showed his head, and the trace running fair into his mouth.

It was, I thought, a horrid place to land a big fish at. When I reeled well up and walked backwards the salmon sank down so deep that he could not be reached from the boat: to right or left I could not move because of the bushes. So I had to shorten a short line still more, and hold him up, and any fisherman knows the disagreeable feeling of having a heavy fish on a very short line just below you. Then he came in—for the last time.

*Mons Gjörven, Sivert Störveide, Mattias Saetre—three most skilful Norway Gaffers.*

With rapid deliberation Mons got in the gaff,—no mistake about it this time,—lifted the heavy weight into the boat, and then, helped by my eager arm, brought him up the bank and threw him down on the grass, well away from the river —safe, and ours at last!

I may claim what credit is due to me—for keeping as tight a line as was possible during the three-quarters of an hour's struggles and plungings along the bank. And, I think, also some for forcing the fish at the critical time to take the narrow channel when he would rather have chosen the wider one. But I feel that far more than half the credit is due to my gaffer. It was his ready help at certain times which really gave us the victory. Without his wonderful bit of timely support at the first deep crossing, where alone or badly guided I must undoubtedly have lost my footing, an instantaneous catastrophe would have occurred. His swift unravellings kept clear half a dozen times a line that, do what I would, had to saw through branches far ahead of me. He never lost his head for a moment, or his almost phlegmatic coolness. This coolness was indeed a characteristic of our three men: I know that any of them would at such a time have shown equal readiness and resource,—would have been equally reliable and to be depended on at any crisis. If at any time a spinning-reel overran, deft fingers

were always ready to put things right without the slightest fuss or flurry. The absence of fuss was always remarkable, as well as the absence of what is called strong language, when the situation might almost be said to have demanded it. "I think we shall not see that spoon again," when that shining instrument, too heavily weighted, found a permanent resting-place in some sodden root or tree-trunk at the bottom of a deep pool. "Now we have lost three fish to-night." What would be the words deemed most appropriate by a fiery Highland gillie for such an occasion—when after five minutes' or ten minutes' fight, perhaps the last of the trio of good fish managed to slip off from the big number 7/0 hook you so fondly trusted in? I *felt* at times that a good loud blast of vituperation, in English, or Gaelic, or Norse, would have been more in sympathy with my agitated feelings than the placid comments I grew so accustomed to. I never heard either a big or a little D pass from the lips of one of our three men.

But it was, I knew, as proud a moment for Mons as for his master when the great salmon at last lay safe on the bank. I had a steelyard in my pocket, which weighed up to 40 lb.: to-day it was useless,—I did not even go through the form of taking it out; and when the fish hung from the 60-lb. scale it drew out a good 12 lb.

*"Platform" Pool—Stryn River, Norway.*

more than the 40. An hour after its capture, and with the loss of a good deal of blood, it weighed an honest 52 lb. This latter steelyard had been recently shop-tested and found accurate. Then the fish was weighed on another scale, and finally with Norwegian weights, and all corresponded.

And—that there should be no flaw, for once, in the doing,—no fly this time in the ointment—the fish was perfectly fresh run: there were sea-lice on his tail.

"'Sea-lice on his tail!' Imagine any human being made happier by such a thing as this!" So may some exclaim who only know salmon boiled or fried. Yet that little detail gives satisfaction now, and will do so, strange as it may appear to such critics, for long afterwards. They perhaps imagine that the triumph of capture is a mere momentary sensation, soon forgotten, dimmed by the next success, or even sooner, when the appetite has been satisfied with the slain. It is one of the greatest charms of all kinds of the higher sports that this is not so: the famous run so brilliantly described by the stately 'Quarterly' lived, we may be sure, in the remembrances of all who took part in it, so long as they remembered anything, and is often quoted now. The shot which gave you your first stag, or your best one, rests in your memory, even if

their dusty heads hang in other homes than yours. I think it is Whyte Melville who says that one of the advantages of hunting from home is that so many places you pass in your daily life remind you of some little incident which gives you pleasure: a good start on the day of a record run, an abnormal fence well got over, even a skilful shot. And certainly a hard fight with a very big salmon is not likely to be forgotten in any little while: small details connected with it will stand out sharply defined after many years. The triumph of capture lasts long in the memory: eyes will get dimmer and legs less capable of carrying their owner over rough hillsides or slippery rocks, but the mind will travel back to the adventure of some far-away spring or sombre autumn day, and recall even such small particulars as the fly used, the position for the shot, and the direction of the wind.

# SOME BIG LOST NORWAY SALMON.

THE narrative of a fisherman, solemnly vouched for though it may be, is not necessarily believed in by even his dearest friends, for it deals with the unknown and is incapable of proof, and without altogether imputing evil motives men judge the teller of such tales harshly. The corries of the forests of Scotland lie open to the sun, and if a stalker, coming home, was to boast of having met with a stag as big as a wapiti, with a head of five-and-twenty points, and that beast was not seen again by other eyes, there would be a good negative proof of his non-existence, and the stalker would be set down as a liar. But a great river is a mystery, and hides many secrets in its depths. It is often the abiding-place for months of huge fish which may never be seen: they come occasionally to the surface, but perhaps at a time when only the trees and ferns

and insects are spectators. Now and then an out-of-the-way monster is captured whose presence has never been suspected, but who shows plainly by shape and colour how long he has made the river his home. Or it may chance—and this, I think, often happens with big fish—that he stays too long in the fresh water, and gets caught in the ice, and so a ponderous decaying carcase first shows riverside men the creature which had been sagacious enough to avoid having anything to do with them. The water, after it closes over a lost fish, tells no tale: nothing is more substantial and solid than a salmon in the grip of the steelyard; nothing more delusive and shadowy and intangible than one whose connection with you is broken.

So—though I write this melancholy paper with all the honesty of which I am capable—I hardly expect to be able to make others see matters as I saw them, or to convince sceptical people that due allowance must not, here also, be made for fishermen's tales.

In the Julys of 1902-3 we, a party of three, sometimes four, rods, fished a Norway river, and we captured in the two months a hundred and sixteen salmon, running up to 43 lb., and with an average weight of 18½ lb. The walls of the smoking-room and dining-room of the lodge

*"Platform" Pool—Stryn River, Norway.*

From an original sketch by G. E. Lodge.

were ornamented with the carefully traced-out likenesses of many fish over 40 lb.; fish as big as 45 lb. caught with a fly, up to 56 lb. caught by spoon or prawn. Everything in the world is relative, and this is curiously so with fishing. An angler sallies forth along the pleasant river-banks, "among pale gander-grass and azure culver-keyes," and catches a number of quarter-of-a-pound trout, and one something over the pound, and comes home happy and contented. Or he fishes a river where salmon average 8 to 10 lb., and gets one double the usual weight. Our sport was good, but we went out one year with a soldier who pushed a week further north than we did, and got a hundred salmon to his own rod in six weeks, several of which were over 40 lb.—one 48. And, to finish this comparison of sport, I read a few days ago an account of what seemed to be almost a pathetic contest: where some scores of working men met in an angling competition in England, and the first prize was gained by one who had secured for his long day's work some 4 ounces of fish: the fifth winner had, I think, his catch recorded in decimals of an ounce. We often got sea-trout on our big salmon-flies: they were fine bold fish, averaging 3 lb., with an occasional big one; but they gave us no satisfaction here, for they often

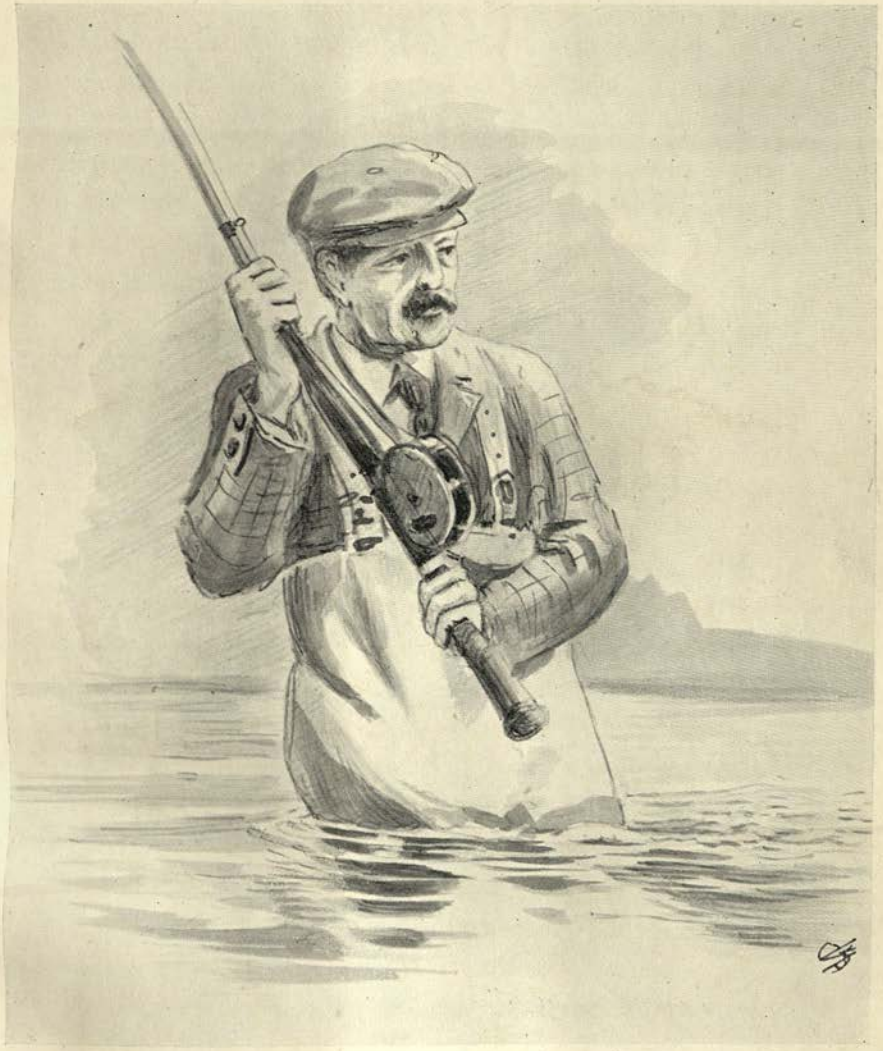
took the fly just as it swung over a place where it might have been taken by a salmon, and so they were dragged in at once with the strong tackle, and ignominiously handlined by the men, and jumped ashore or into the boat as if they had been burn-trout. We were not at the top of the tree, nor yet at the bottom, but fairly well up in its pleasant branches, and we were happy on our river, and contented with our lot—contented, that is to say, in a general way, for there were times when anything approaching such a virtue was far from some of us, and never farther than one dull evening when I, having lost a very heavy fish after a long hunt, came home full of sorrow and found that an old friend and brother angler had just ended a wild chase over a difficult country and been finally broken before he reached the impassable blockade of a bridge.

Some three or four years ago another friend fishing in a certain pool of this river hooked a big salmon in heavy water which finally went down, and, it being very difficult if not impossible to follow, he got broken. Then the trees along the bank were cut. This year this man's brother got smashed, as I have said, above the bridge, and next day we brought a boat down, and moored it at a "ness" above where the catastrophe happened, so that, supposing a wild fish

took the same course again, there would be some chance of following him for an extra 200 yards or so. Some chance, certainly. I do not know what the other members of our community thought, as they looked at that boat and then at the deep heavy water racing past it down to the six-arched wooden bridge. In the state the river was in then I doubt if our splendid boatmen would have been able to do anything: the difficulties at the "ness," above were, I felt in my heart, pretty sure to be very much more complicated by greater difficulties at the bridge. To hit off the same narrow arch through which the fish went, and go through it without smashing the boat against one or other of the piers, and then find yourself still joined on to the salmon in the comparative calm of the pool below, seemed as if it would be too great a combination of good luck for poor mortals to expect. We thought the only way would be to let the fish away with a great length of line, and then follow the track when we saw which arch he was making for, but all control of him would certainly be lost in that rapid passage. This was when the river was big. It fell to me later on, when the water had fallen a foot or eighteen inches, to have a brisk run with a 20-pounder down to this very "ness," and as he was determined we took to the boat, and landed him on the opposite side

above the bridge. But this was then a perfectly safe though troublesome proceeding.

On the night when the double defeat just mentioned took place, I hooked a big fish with spoon, and there is nothing sensational to relate about the fight which then took place. He crossed over to the far side of a strong wide stream, and went down the river with a longer line out than was desirable; but there was no difficulty in following him and keeping fairly well abreast of him, and knowing the water which lay below us we had high hopes of landing him. But the hooks had not enough grip; the heavy strain probably cut the hold, and after going down some 500 or 600 yards the spoon came quietly away. I had him on long enough to know that he was a very good salmon, but we never saw him. This was a great disappointment, and it was with a despondent mind that I tramped up again, and fished a long, awkward, bank-protected place which occasionally gives a great reward but oftener nothing. My brother-in-law's fight had been of a much more stirring kind. From the platform where he rose the fish to the next pool are some 200 or 300 yards of rapid water and wooded banks, but these are easily negotiable by an active man. Then a duck of the rod at the right angle to get under a wire rope, and you are arrived at a pool with a good



*" Will he come?"*

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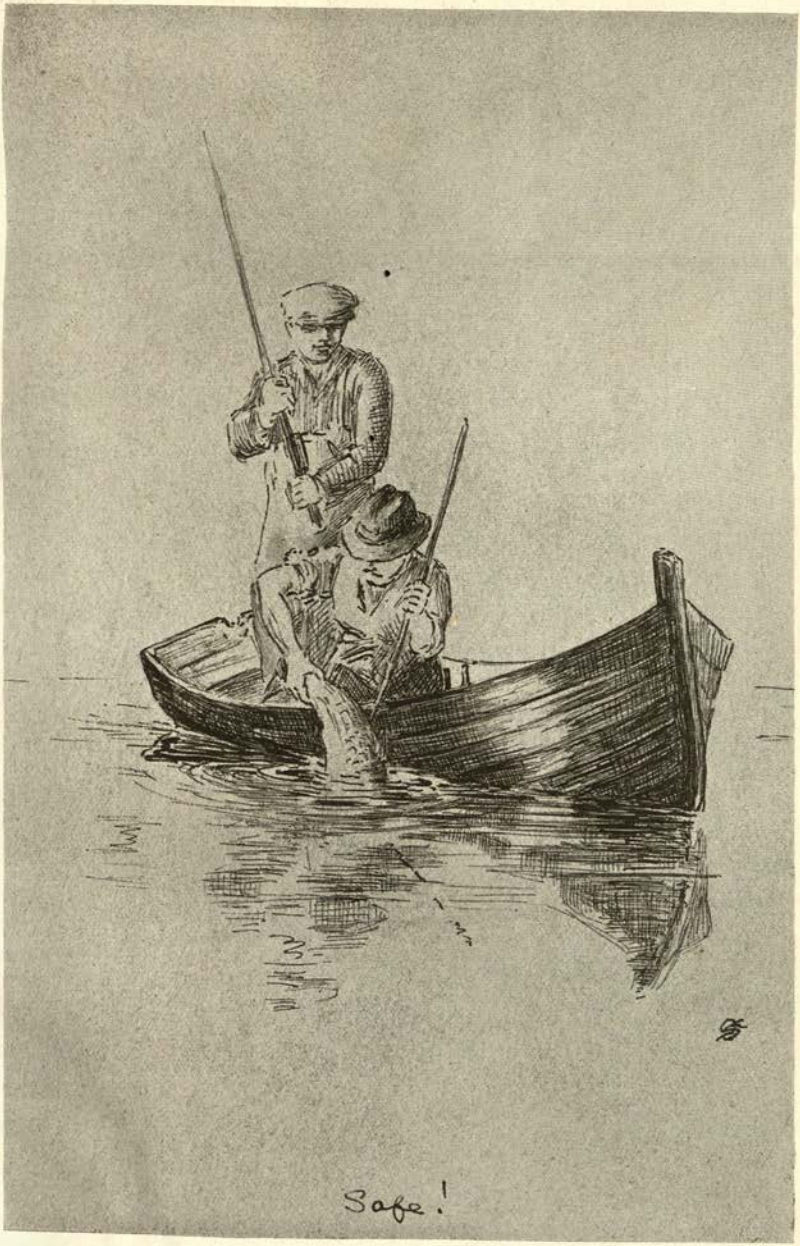
backwater in it, where many salmon get gaffed. But the river was very big that day, and the fish, though he stayed there some time, and even let his pursuers see the top of the casting-line, would have none of the gaffing-place. Then follows a country which tries a man now if he has to go over it quickly, but was much worse that day before certain trees and branches were cut. The bank is steep and high and wooded in places, and you have to go up and down deep hollows in it, now in the river and now on land, ever holding well up a heavy rod, and knowing that if you give any slack you give it at your peril. A long bit of marshy ground follows, with a "ness" at the low end, and a quick turn in the river to your side, fringed with low bushes from which your man has to fend the line with the gaff if you have much out. Next a quiet place which, as the water was that day, takes you over the waders, and a small backwater where the boat was afterwards sent. Then began the real difficulties: the bank gets steeper and more wooded; there is a steep slope, difficult to get up, and more trees, followed by an all but impossible point, where, if you got round at all, you would be over the armpits. Finally—some 200 yards below—that ominous brown bridge. Outside the backwater was running a very heavy stream.

So it can easily be seen that when a man

linked to a big salmon has arrived by rapid progress down such a road as I have described to this particular haven—this backwater—he will be in a somewhat dilapidated condition, no matter how good his state of training may be: wet up to the waist (waders are a useless encumbrance at such times), the perspiration streaming off him, his arm aching with holding up a heavy rod. One has so many things to think about at such a time. Look well to your feet on the steep bank, down which, if you once slip, you need not bother further about your salmon, and at the same time look up at the point of your rod; for with a long line out in the heavy water, especially if there is a wind blowing, you must often do that to gauge what strain you are putting on. You see to your footing when you have to enter the river; but whilst you snatch a moment to guess rather than make sure into what depth your next step is to be taken, a furious bolt of the fish almost drags the rod-top into the water, and then, whatever the consequences may be, your first care must be to get it up again.

Here came my friend that ill-omened night, hard-pressed, sweating, blowing, legs feeling sometimes strangely weak, but bravely sticking to his work, and still, so far, the victor. Past the trees, past the ness, into the backwater, out of it. "Can I get round that awful point?"



Safe!

Even so, the bridge is within 200 yards, and there is little chance in such a stream of being able to stop the fish above it. I think that point was then impassable—not to be got round, in hot blood or cold. The fish is far away in the deep racing stream: the backing is flying out, the reel-handle a blurred mass: if you were to touch the line now it would cut you to the very bone. Pressure on the side-plate,—more pressure, more still: a little slacking of the whirr: the butt to the fish, the top far back over your shoulder,—a miracle if it stops him, but such have happened. The hand now on the line, tighter, tighter still; the rod bent to a circle and furiously dragged at till you feel the middle joint must go if the top stands: then a momentary and most tremendous tension, and then sudden ease: the rod flies straight.

So he was broken, the word conveying in this case of course nothing of disgrace: you want a steel wire at such a crisis: something better than the entrails of a worm. We met and mourned together: my experience had been heart-breaking, though nothing to his. But my time was to come.

Two days later I started at a big deep pool, fished by casting or throwing from a boat. It was full of swirls and eddies and cross-currents, caused by the salmon-trap at the head and its approaches: these had spoilt the pool, and flies

worked badly and untruly in it. One fish killed and one lost was my account here so far. Fly did as usual, nothing; but at the third or fourth cast with prawn I hooked a salmon. He gave me no time to observe the formula of letting out slack line and then striking hard: he bolted off at once, and we thought that very likely he was only lightly held and would get off. The more deliberate appropriation of a prawn promises best. The fish was far below us when he took the bait, and the line, taut for a few moments, was soon slack enough; for he came right up-stream as hard as he could go, and very much faster than I could reel up, and actually passed under the stern of the boat. Its nearness alarmed him, and he turned and went as hard down again. We saw a mighty back-fin cutting through the water like a torpedo, and for some seconds there was an appalling uncertainty as to whether he was on or off; then the half-gathered-in line was straightened and a good deal more run out. For some few minutes I had the usual pleasant give-and-take, and then he made a violent rush out of the pool and started off on what proved to be a long journey down the river. So out of rough Laxigar, with its awkward stump-guarded little island at the tail, we followed in the boat with fairly comfortable minds. The trace was a very strong treble one of excellent gut; the spinning-line had just been well tested,

and found unbreakable with any reasonable strain; the hooks were big and sharp; and the water below us was of a safe and pleasant nature, with no fosses to stop us. There was no reason why, with a little care, we should not follow the fish to the fiord miles away, if he was minded to go there. We had to follow him far enough. He went in rapid and yet stately fashion through the long reach of "Church," and at the top of the next pool, "Bank," stopped in a small bit of deep water guarded, save for a narrow inlet and outlet, by shallows. The river was big that day; if it had been small very likely the fish would never have left the pool where he first met us, or leaving Laxigar, he would have probably given us an opportunity of killing him in "Church," and then this history need not have been written. But he fell under the spell of the heavy water. I had a very anxious time in the shallow protected place where he stopped. It was close to the shore; but I had to keep in the boat, for the land was an island some 200 yards long, and if I had got out and he had made up his mind to go down, he would certainly have broken me. For a long time the fish was afraid to go down owing to the thin water and unwilling to go up, and for twenty minutes or half an hour we were practically anchored by him. He sulked in the deep hole so close that the top of the long trace was nearly

always out of the water, and if, with all the strain I could put on him, he was shifted a yard or two, he at once got back to his old place. The water above and below was fairly rapid, and it was not easy to hold a boat in it; but after a time my gaffer (Mons) tried it, and we got above the fish, and on the far side, and then below him. And ever as the extra strain moved him a little, and we thought he would go down, back he went to his old quarters. He was so near that Mons could almost reach him with an oar; but the salmon paid extraordinary little attention to all the pokings and splashings which were administered to him. He stood still, or only moved a yard or two, and felt as a heavy lump of wood might feel. Once I caught a glimpse of his long shadowy form, and by this time we knew we had to do with something very heavy.

At last, after making both fisherman and boatman very anxious and irritated, he worked his way out by a narrow channel into deep water, and we, rejoicing, followed him. He passed swiftly through "Bank," through "Boyces," and at the bottom of this pool we landed, and got on to ideal ground for following a big fish. For hundreds of yards the river ran now, on our side, by a smooth grassy lily-of-the-valley-covered bank, where you could go at any speed, and keep on level and equal terms with your salmon. He

*Anna Svarstad—an admirable Housekeeper.*

passed through the tail of "Boyces," and into the swiftly running but steady stream of "Cut bushes." Two hundred yards or so of this led into a pool called "Kirkeide," and at the lower end of this latter is a huge backwater, a most desirable and suitable place for landing a tired fish. We had come the best part of a mile: the long continuous strain was telling on him: he still kept well out in the stream, but his strong rushes had ceased, and as we neared a place in the bank where a few days before I had landed a 27-pounder, I thought that we might be able to doubly mark it by also getting ashore this much greater prize. But the salmon was still too strong and too far out in the stream to come in here.

And now surely never had anglers a better opportunity of gauging, before they handled, their prize. The short sight he gave us of him when he passed under the boat told us little; the glimpse caught of him when sulking, nothing, but that he was big. The weight test on the arms was a very fallible one: a 30-pounder in a stream feels very heavy. But when he got into the clear smooth water above "Kirkeide" he showed himself almost as plainly to us as if he had been on the bank. For a hundred yards or more we could see his every movement: follow the line till it went into the water and joined the trace: follow still the trace leading fair up to his mouth, so disprov-

ing what at times we had been afraid of — that he was foul-hooked. The great, pale, silvery-green, symmetrical form shone ghostly-like, but with wonderful distinctness, in the dark emerald-green water. We could see his fins working: now and then he pulled impatiently, as it were, at his reins, and sometimes, turning half over, showed the ridge of his back. He might lunge about and give some trouble at the landing, but his real fighting was over: he was becoming tractable, and could be led instead of leading us.

And we began to make almost sure of him. That men who had fished for many years and habitually quoted half a dozen sayings about premature confidence should ever allow themselves to be sure of a salmon before he was on the bank, shows to what a pitch ignorance and presumption can lead mortals. We knew the strength of the tackle. We knew by this time that the fish must be well hooked: we saw ever coming nearer the calm smooth backwater into which he was to be gently and yet firmly towed, and if he should manage to struggle still farther down, we had the boat still with us, dragged behind by a keenly interested farmer, who had left his hay-making to see the sport. With audacity, which no doubt deserved punishment, we even speculated on his weight. "He is a very big fish," said Mons. "I

think he is bigger than P.'s,"—a 48-pounder which my man had gaffed the year before.

And then—without a struggle or jerk—with no extra strain put on it, the rod-top, which for an hour had formed a fair and beautiful bow, flew straight. The fish was free! So done was he that for perhaps eight or ten seconds he stood almost in the same place, giving ample time if he had been nearer the bank for an active man to run down and gaff him even yet. He stood so, almost motionless, and then slowly disappeared into deep water. The splendid trace had parted: either in the hole where he had sulked so long, or, more likely, when he made his first wild rush up-stream in Laxigar, the gut must have got a terrible rub on a rock.

So the long struggle ended. This was the greatest calamity of my fishing life—the greatest blow of the kind I have ever received. He was so very nearly ours: a great triumph was so very close.

To be suddenly divorced from a very big salmon after a long fight is—in this country at least—the greatest misfortune which can happen to a sportsman: one which admits of no hope, or possible later victory. To miss an extremely good stag is a bitter experience—but then, before the day is over, you may get at him again in a better place,

and kill him; you may come across him the next week, or the next season. But when a big fish gets off, he is to all intents and purposes lost to you for ever. In one small fraction of a second you jump from the highest hope to the blankest despair. Once in some blue moon a man may catch a fish in which the broken tackle of a previous day still remains, but the chance is not worth considering: if after an hour's fight you part company, it is as well to realise that you part company for ever. Some one, maybe in the autumn, may catch that salmon, with a great bony hook in his lower jaw, and far gone in weight; but even if that man was you, the captured one would be far different from the splendid sea-fresh monster which triumphed over you in July.

Then came the idle, useless, miserable speculations as to weight,—our gaffers were, as I have said, used to seeing big fish, and were wonderfully good judges of size, before the steelyard was applied. "I think that fish is 28 lb." "I fear he not more than 26," and the latter figure he was pretty sure to be. I remember one night the three men each guessed, separately, exactly the weight of a 30-pounder. But I shall be told, and of course rightly told, that for even the most experienced the guessing of the size of a salmon on the shore and in the water, no matter how

clearly seen, is a very different thing. We thought our lost salmon might be caught by the netters in the still water below, or in some trap above, when, if met with soon, he would be recognisable by my tackle, and in that case I offered to buy him at market price, and pay a handsome sum in addition. But we heard and saw nothing of him, unless he was the "Stor Lax" which, a day or two afterwards, went through an angry man's net as if it had been paper, or the still greater one of which a glimpse was seen higher up the river a few days afterwards, jumping in an inaccessible hole.

A question which was in continual debate amongst us, especially when the river was big, was, How far is it possible to hold a heavy fish and keep him in a certain place when he makes up his mind to leave it? One day Sivert, and a lady fishing with him, saw a very big salmon indeed jump clean out of the water in a pool from which it is practically impossible to go down. The former—a man used to big fish all his life, and not in the least given to exaggeration—set down this fish, which he saw very clearly, as being quite 60 lb.[1]

In this particular pool we all discarded spinning-

[1] A week or so after we left, a Norwegian gentleman got hold of a salmon in the river, which he lost after a three-hour struggle, the fish going down for probably three-quarters of a mile. It was set down at 30 kilos—a good bit over 60 lb.

rods and light lines. I used a very powerful greenheart, with the thickest Kelson line made, and a trace which was probably as strong as the Kelson —that is, practically unbreakable. The reel was screwed up to its highest tension. Now, supposing a fish of this size was to be hooked firmly with a big fly, we had little doubt what the result would be if he put forth all his strength. The iron would be the weakest link in the chain, and it would go. But a 60-pounder is not likely to take a fly, especially in such a confused jumble of a pool as this was: supposing he took a prawn, or two prawns rather, tied on first-rate, big, well-tempered hooks, how would the fisherman stand in the fight which would then take place? I think this would depend almost entirely on whether that fight was a long or a short one. A big fish, dealt with strongly and masterfully from the very first, often seems to lose heart, and it might be possible to swing him in within reach of the gaff before he knew he was in danger: ordinary-sized salmon in this particular pool were often so treated. The night after I wrote this, one of the two ladies of our party hooked a fish in this very pool on a strong trace and a No. 7 Durham Ranger. She was wading in fairly deep and strongly running water, and very wisely gave the rod to Sivert, her gaffer, who was standing close to her, and made the best of her way to

*The Lake above the Stryn.*

shore. He, following the fish for a few yards instead of giving it any line, hauled it almost by main force into a tiny bit of slack water, and the salmon, bewildered and not realising its position, lay here long enough for the hastily brought gaff to be exchanged for the rod, and it was got ashore in about three minutes, a fresh-run 19-pounder. Once from the Bridge of Awe, on the famous river of that name, I and a friend fishing with me saw a salmon lying in a bit of slack water some 40 yards below us, waiting to run up. We were high above it. He held the rod over the bridge, with its point perpendicularly down, and I, keeping my eye on the plainly seen 18-lb. fish, pulled out the line yard by yard till the fly, swaying about, reached it, and was promptly taken. The fish immediately ran upstream under the bridge; we ran off it, and below, hauled it down, and it was gaffed and on the bank within three minutes by a watch. But such work as this is a happy accident, a chance, not the legitimate prolonged battle we discussed. Granted the 60-pounder, or, to make things sound more probable, a good 40-pounder, well on, deeply hooked with absolutely reliable tackle, in a small bit of comparatively calm water, and a raging torrent all round, above and below, and no possibility of following anything that goes out of it, what are you to do? It may be taken for

granted that if such a fish made a determined bolt the moment he was hooked, he would have such a little way to go that he would be out of the pool and into a wild mass of white water before he could be stopped. I hooked one night in a reasonable place a small fish which did this. He made, without the delay of a second, a furious rush out into a strong stream, and went some 400 yards or so without a moment's check. I have had to do with many wild fish, both small and great, but never with such a one as this, and I have never had a reel "screech"—if that is the legitimate word to use—as my reel did then. There was no difficulty in following, except a steep bit of bank to run up now and then; but the fish went so quick that he very soon completely took what I believe is called one's "first" wind, and I had no time to take in a second supply, and in a very short time I was absolutely and completely done for the time, and quite incapable of following on at all; and if my gaffer had not been close at hand to take the rod, I should have been disgracefully broken in the open, and without any excuse. In more than thirty years' fishing I have never experienced anything of this kind, and I could not—till it happened—have believed that any fish, big or small, could have made such an example of a fairly strong man in good condition. Mons had

then to go at his topmost speed for a long way, and it was some time before he quite got over the pumping operation he went through. The salmon had fully 150 yards of line out when he was stopped. He only weighed 16 lb., and must, I think, have been hooked in some exceedingly tender part of his mouth. I was fishing with only ordinary strong tackle, and had no reason or object in being too hard on the salmon, but I am quite sure that if I had been armed with unbreakable stuff, and had tried to check that run, which began the instant he was hooked, something would have smashed: the rod, if gut and line and hook had all stood. And if a real monster was to play the same game, and be off at once down some water where he could not be followed, he would in a few seconds run out all the line, and break it at the reel, or cut it when so far below you. But if this big fish, instead of being in such a frantic hurry, was to hesitate, and ponder, maybe, on his position, and wonder what it was that had hold of him, and what it was best for him to do—if he were to give you, the fisherman, even two or three seconds' time, then would come your chance and opportunity. Last night—I write these notes by the river—I hooked a good fish in a deep run above a bridge, just where the water left the lake in a strong stream. The arches of this bridge were only

three or four feet high, and it was impossible to get through them even without a rod, and the rock on which you stood was isolated and you could not get up to the lake, and so a fish hooked here had to be played and killed — or lost — without your being able to move. The salmon deliberated a moment or two, and let me get tight hold of him, and then tried to make a rush to get under the bridge, and I stopped him by sheer force within a couple of yards of it, and then he bolted up towards the lake, and I stopped him again. I was using the powerful, almost unbreakable, tackle described as necessary for the famous pool below, and consider that I was sure of that fish if the hold had been a good one, having twice stopped him by sheer force, and so disheartened him; but he was lightly hooked, and got off, leaping high out of the water just before his escape. He seemed to be about 25 lb.

This bridge hole was not much use to us; but two or three days later one of the ladies got hold of another fish here, and held him tight at the right time. This one was well hooked, and very likely would have been landed, but in one of his short runs he managed to get the strong reel line across a very sharp sunken rock, and it went as if it had been a bit of worsted.

*A Norwegian Salmon-trap.*

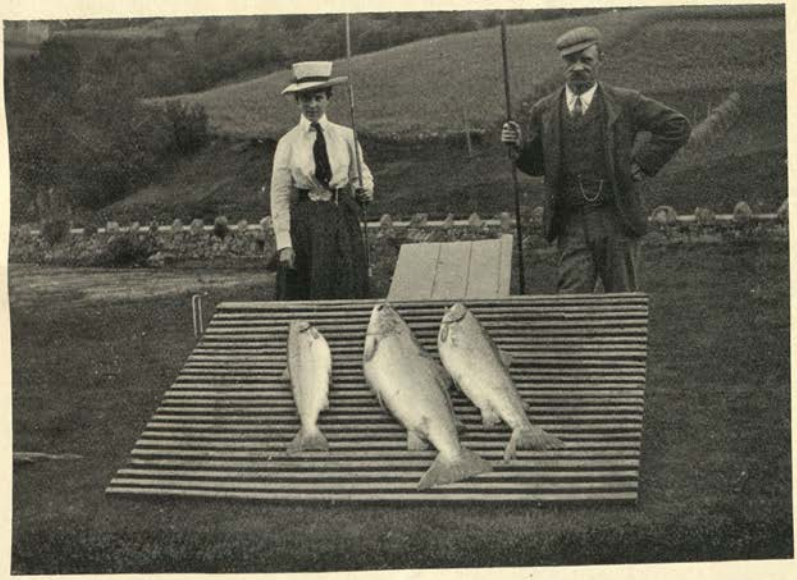
When our time came for this top beat we all fished diligently for the 60-pounder with fly and prawn. The pool where he lived, or rather where his one and only appearance had taken place, was rather a troublesome one to manage properly, for you had to stand in strong water and carefully watch your footing. The bottom was bad in places, and if the leads hung up, and a break had to be effected, that was a bit of work which required a very surprising exertion of strength indeed, and made the hauler feel that he might have a sublime confidence in his trace if he had anything on it better than a rock.

The ladies of our party were for the most part fortunate. One of them killed by fair fishing, and with no advantage given her, more fish than any one else—twenty—and the other hooked and landed the heaviest we got this year — a 34-pounder, with fly. But they had their ups and downs: a broken spoon-ring cost the first a very fine salmon, after half an hour's play in the lake, and the latter lost three fish in one night. "I am the most miserable woman in the world!" she cried to me when we met that midnight. Doubtless she considered herself so to be: she had then no hope of ever having any luck again. But two nights later she got two fish, and the next night her 34-pounder. To finish up this tale

of calamities, her husband, after beginning very well, parted with a heavy fish in a pool which seldom gave anything, and the next night, when none of us had any adventures, got hold of three good salmon and lost them all.

It is not an uncommon thing to hear one say, who has lost something which it was a great trouble to him to lose, that he would have given his little finger to have got it; and many a one has honestly felt this, for example, as he helplessly watched the best stag of the season disappear unscathed over a skyline. But it is, for reasons given earlier, much more trying to lose a very big fish than a deer. As there is nothing which in a moment makes a tired, despondent, perhaps hopeless, man suddenly become alert and keen as the hooking of a big fish, so there can be few things more appalling than the sudden losing of him when he is nearly done. There is no gradation, or slowing down as it were: the gap is immediate and immense. He is on, and you are full of the most exhilarating hope: he is off, and with the speed of light blank misery is upon you. I do not know what the sensation of losing a fine lion would be like, except that it would certainly be an unpleasant one; but if the life of a man depended on it, it would be very much easier for him to go to Africa, and stay there till he shot a very fine lion indeed, than in any

*July* 1905—38 *lb.*; 16 *lb.*; 14 *lb.*; 12 *lb.*



*July* 1903—34 *lb.*; 17 *lb.*; 11 *lb.*

part of the world within a given time, make sure of killing a 50-lb. salmon with rod and line. It is fortunate for our race that the rash offers to sacrifice parts of our persons which we sometimes make in emergencies are not taken literally, or we should rarely see any one keen about shooting or fishing going about unmaimed. But let no one think that the offer of sacrifice is called forth by a little thing: the sudden straightening of a rod when a 30- or a 40-pounder gets free is a dire misfortune, though one to be got over in time; but the two or three occasions in a man's life when he is given a greater chance than this, and it does not come off, are marks by which he will sometimes measure the years.

I once lost two very heavy fish in the same week, both hooked in the "Seal" pool of the Awe. I kept a heavy strain on the first with a powerful rod for an hour, but never saw him, and then he went down and cut me on some bad rocks below. Two days later I played the second fish in the same place for nearly the same time, and then he too went down and got the line round a rock in the middle of the river. I gave the rod to the man who was with me, and climbed high up on the hillside, and then I clearly saw the salmon, lying motionless close to the far side of the stone in a bit of quiet water. I went a hundred yards above him

and waded out and worked away till by chance my line came clear, and he went on down the river; but by the time I got back to the land and was able to follow on and reel in the long line which was out, he got across another of those places which here have saved so many fishes' lives, and cut me. I saw him very plainly in the slack water by the stone, though of course not nearly so well as the lost Norway one, and I believe that these two were the heaviest salmon I have ever hooked.

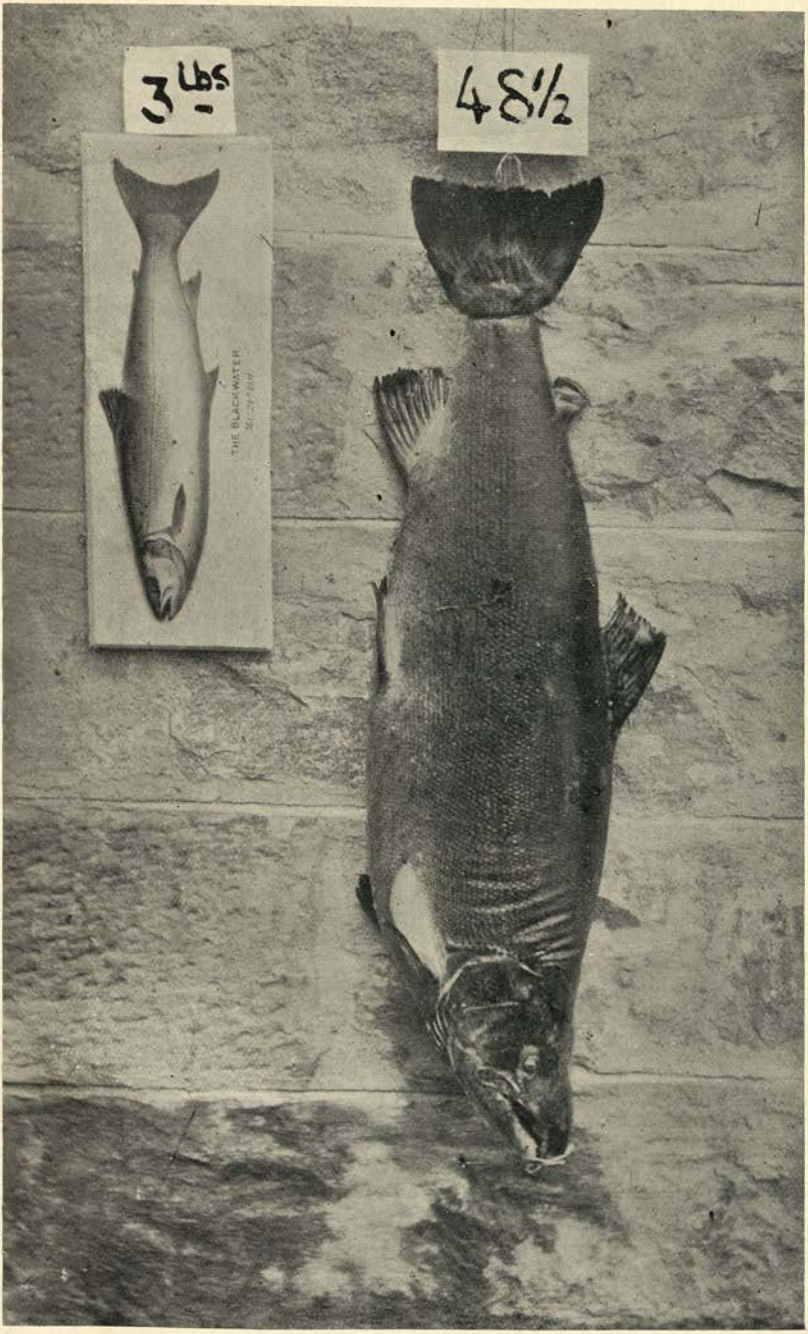
Salmon naturally were to us the chief topic of conversation, as they were our chief article of food; and next to salmon we were, or I was, chiefly interested in bears. Bears are not at all plentiful in this part of Norway, yet we occasionally come within measurable distance of them. At an inn where we lunched one day, when driving to the river, we just missed seeing the skin of one which had been killed the week before. Then there was pointed out to us a place where a few years before a poor hunter had been mistaken for a bear when beating for the game, and two of his companions had fired at him as he crouched in some scrub, their bullets going through both his shoulders. The man was terribly injured, but he is still alive. A day or two later we came still nearer to a bear, for he

crossed the river within half a mile of where we were staying: about midnight two belated girls coming home saw a big animal swimming over, and did not realise till he got out of the water and shook himself what sort of a beast he was. He was traced in the morning through the fields, and within a few yards of the "Fredheim" of the village, and a feeble attempt was made to pursue him over the mountains, but no good "bear-dog" was available, and he escaped. One midnight, as we walked home to the lodge through the heavily-scented air, Sivert told us a grim story of long ago, which he was careful to say he did not vouch for, though he "had seen the cave." A man committed a murder and was captured. It was in the late autumn, and the local bear had taken up his habitation in his hole for his long winter and spring siesta. The authorities, instead of executing the criminal themselves, ordained that chance should settle his fate, and not they, and put him into the cave, to keep company with its shaggy tenant, on the understanding that if he was devoured it would be well, or if, when a certain time in spring came, and he was in a condition to come out, it would be well also. So here the murderer spent the dark months; his wife brought him food and drink, and he sat, we may be sure, very quietly, and did nothing to disturb his unpleasant bedfellow, and Sivert

assured us that when the sap began to run up the birches he came out unharmed.

Some of us would almost have risked a night in that cave if the doing so would have given us the great fish we had lost.

Twenty pounds is a very good weight in the Conon. It would be interesting to know if this monster was a stranger or an abnormally sized native.




*A 48½-lb. Fish from the Fairburn Water, River Conon, Ross-shire.*

# SNIPE-SHOOTING.

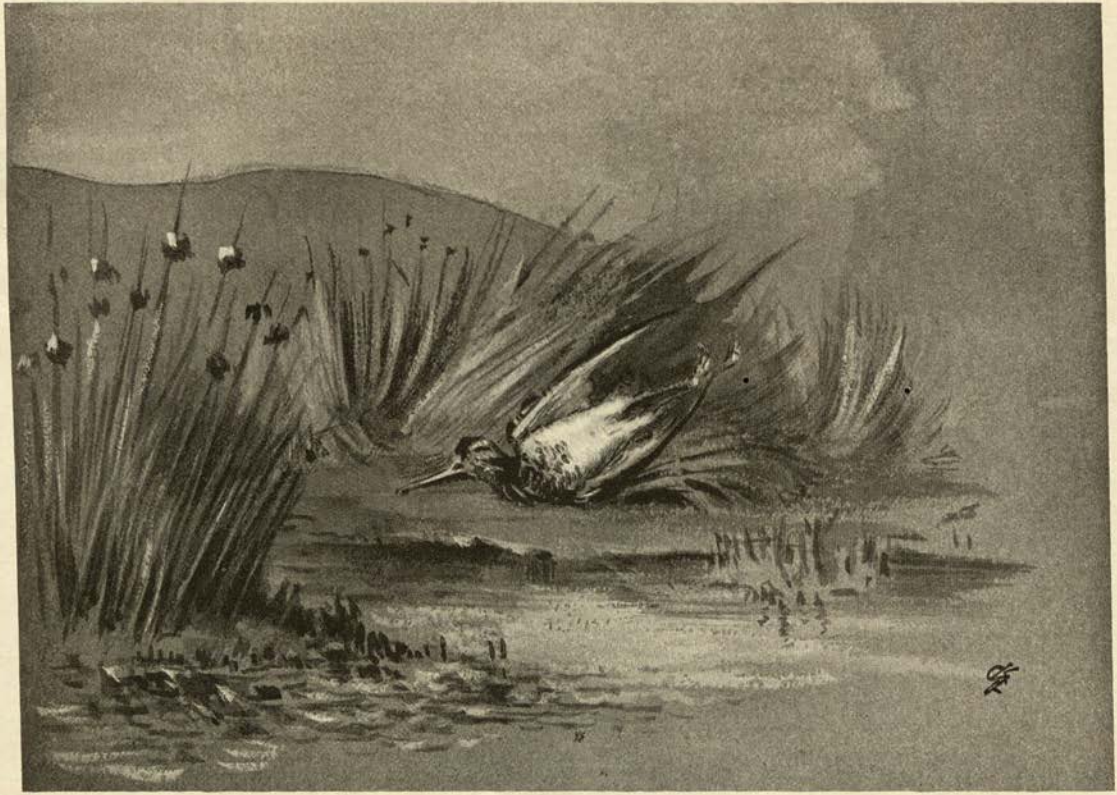
## I.

### SNIPE-SHOOTING IN THE WEST OF IRELAND.

THE Irish experience of the writer has been but small. I spent two autumns in a deer forest in the north-west of the country and secured a reasonable number of stags, wider and stronger in their heads and heavier in their bodies than any I have had to do with during thirty years' pursuit of them on the mainland of Scotland. When the stalking season was over I devoted myself to smaller game, and made moderate but interesting bags of grouse, woodcock, duck, and snipe, while occasionally a wet crawl or a long patient wait was rewarded with a goose. There was a fair number of snipe on the shooting, a range of some 30,000 acres; but they were so scattered over the hills that, except in a few especially suitable bogs, it was hardly worth while

making them a definite object. On the good ground you might get a dozen or fifteen in an hour, and then toil hard all the rest of the day for eight or ten more. I got 250 in the best season. Queer and uncomfortable was the walking over the best of the bogs: a thin carpet of tough matted roots and wiry turf floated the shooter over an unfathomable deposit of liquid mud and water—unfathomable to him at any rate, if he broke properly through the skin and had no one to help him out. Directly you set foot on this great raft it shook and quivered before you, rolling up very much as a carpet does when wind gets under it. At first I looked with a certain amount of dislike and apprehension at these unstable platforms, but they supported my not very great weight fairly enough; and though I think I always managed to sink in over the tops of the long fishing-stockings I used to wear here, I never slipped so far through that it was not easy to get out.

But it was far otherwise with a friend who shot with me the first time we attempted the worst of these morasses. He was clad in spruce khaki, and he weighed certainly seven stone more than I did. He had for a time a comfortable seat in a boat on the lake which bordered the bog, but when he left that safe resting-place he suffered grievously. Two stalwart keepers attended him,



*"Well Marked!"*

one on each side, and seldom, I suppose, did he travel more than a dozen yards without breaking through the crust. When, after an hour's struggling, he got back to firm ground, there was little of him that was not soaked with water or black with peat. If—in a hot Indian station—he should come across this paper, it will recall to him a strange morning's experience. And I, for my part, will not forget the pluck and determination he showed and the cheery courage with which he faced, in so sorrowful a condition, a fourteen-mile drive without a coat. When working that bog during the next few months, if any one got into an unusually deep hole he was sure to say he had hit upon the Major's track.

In the middle of the autumn of 1909 I found myself settled in a country which is said to be especially the home of the snipe. Here are their ideal winter quarters: on these great stretches of flat land they can find all they require. There are damp rushy fields innumerable, pleasant to walk over if it were not for the steep high banks which divide them; sodden mosses, heavy and tiring to cross,—"mountains" the natives call them, though they may only be a few feet above sea-level, and have never a little knob or prominence on their spongy surface on which a tired man can seat himself while a dog works round for a dead bird. There are great tracts of rough, dry heather; wet

grassy hollows, mown for hay in summer and forming shallow lakes later on; treacherous margins of lakes proper, where a man, light or heavy, must go warily if he would not sink swiftly out of sight.

The summer and the autumn of 1909 will long be remembered in the south-west of Ireland as the driest on record: by the farmers for the ease and certainty with which they got in their crops; by the snipe-shooter for the woful interference with his sport caused by lack of water. While the oat-crop was rotting in Scotland and potatoes could not be lifted out of the sodden ground, our favoured country was flooded with sunshine; the November winds blew as gently as at midsummer, and often for days together there was no wind at all. At the beginning of December I had only had on a waterproof twice—twice in six weeks. The weather was perfect for picnics and exploring the country, but it was very bad indeed for the purpose which had brought me out, and I sometimes found it difficult to remain pleasantly silent when the beauties of the mellow St Luke's summer were being enthusiastically discussed. Clear skies; gorgeous sunsets; July temperature! I wanted none of these things. The rushy fields through which we ought to be "squelching" over the ankles were as dry as a bone; the snipe must have moist earth to shove his bill into, not a

brittle stubble; wet soft footprints of cattle to investigate, not hard-baked, even dusty, holes. The small "flashes" dried up, one of the shallow lakes disappeared altogether; a few miserable stagnant pools were, at the end of November, all that represented the scores of acres of rippling water of other years. Then there was a warm, even a hot, sun to walk under, and for many days in succession no breeze to give help to panting, anxious dogs.

Then there came another record: I was told that here there was practically no frost—just an odd night or two about Christmas, and lo! we got eight nights of bitter frost; the bogs became unpierceable to anything weaker than a pickaxe; scent of all kind vanished, and my setters became worse than useless. The snipe soon left the rough places; at the first touch of hard weather they deserted their bogs; they squatted in ditches and by any little open spring; they seemed like the octopus to have eyes all round them; your entrance into a fifteen-acre field was often the signal for every bird to leave it, and when they got up they flew to some purpose; calling wildly to their friends and neighbours to follow them, they departed in wisps of five or ten or twenty; one morning we put up about fifty together, and saw no more of them that day.

So day after day, week after week, slipped by.

This combination of untoward weather sorely puzzled the experienced local "sportsmen"; they had never seen such a long-continued drought, nor had they ever known such severe early frosts, and their calculations as to the whereabouts of the snipe and their behaviour for any particular day were for a time completely upset. Most of the birds disappeared, and what remained were unapproachable. Halloran, one of the professional shooters, knowing more about them than most men, had some success in driving or "moving" them. But moving snipe on a calm day, or on any day, is not work for an impatient man; it is an operation calculated to try even a perfect temper.

The race of men who earn a livelihood by shooting is much rarer now in our islands than it used to be. The Highlander who wandered over what might be called "open" country, and now and then did a little poaching on preserved ground, is practically extinct, though even in these days deer are occasionally shot by men who have no license to shoot them, and a pony may be missed from some remote lodge to return after a day or two weary and stained by the burden he has carried. The draining of the fens in the south-east of England has to a great extent taken away the occupations of the fowlers who lived there by their guns. But both in certain parts of England and in the

north-west of Scotland there are still to be found men who shoot wildfowl for the market, and earn a hard, precarious living by punting, of all sports the most risky and exciting, and perhaps the most fascinating.

In Ireland, however, there are large tracts of country not preserved, which are shot over by professional fowlers who are known—at any rate, in the district I am writing about—as "sportsmen," and are so designated on their letters. When speaking of the country as "open," it is very necessary to add that it is only so to certain people: a casual stranger who found a comfortable little inn to live in during the winter, with the view of shooting over the district round about, would soon find that he was an unwelcome guest.

In the district in which I pitched my camp there is a great extent of country which is regularly worked by some four or five of these "sportsmen." Part of it consists of large properties which, for one reason or another, the owners do not think it worth their while to preserve, and there are many small estates mixed up with them, and land on which the tenants have the game. Over such places the professional has a sort of general license to travel; each of them has his beat; he respects his brother professional's boundaries, and he is rarely interfered with by the small farmers whose

whitewashed houses flash in the sun over many thousands of acres in this western county. All these men shoot for the London market, and the snipe that is delicately served to fastidious diners at the Ritz or the Carlton very possibly lived its brief happy life in the marshes of Clare or Kerry.

From the middle of October to the end of the shooting season the professionals work very hard and continuously; weather must be bad indeed to stop altogether their operations; some of them work both early and late; others, off before daybreak, make a point of being in early in the afternoon. They often have long tramps to reach their shooting-ground; it may be a still longer one home, when night settles down over the land and gives shelter to their tiny prey. What they do not know about snipe is hardly worth knowing. I was struck by a remark one of them made to me. "I study them," Halloran said, and he had done so to some purpose if his claim to have shot well over thirty thousand is justified, as I am confident it is.

Of course this kind of shooting, depending chiefly on the weather, varies very much: the moon affects it, the local rains and frosts; still more the rain and frost and wind which are at work hundreds of miles to the east and north. The amateur bewails his ill-fortune if the elements are unfavourable,

and curses his fate as he sits in a comfortable smoking-room, or tramps over leagues of snipeless bogs. When things are against him the professional's lot is much harder; the day's bag is of vital importance to him; a missed bird or two means the loss of so many silver coins. These folk do not often fire random shots; they do not as a rule trouble themselves about "Jacks," which have a value in the market proportionate to their size; they shoot steadily, often brilliantly, and their average of kills to cartridges is probably very high. There is a somewhat heavy initial outlay: the gun and ammunition, the £3 license, the cost of boxes for the game, and postage and commission, the buying and keeping of a dog. Early in the season the daily bags are generally small: six, five, three, perhaps only one snipe; later on they improve; on a very good day in the winter there may be thirty snipe to carry home,—here is a pound at once. Before the 1st of March sport generally becomes poor, the birds are scarce and wild, and no doubt the men are tired of the constant work, and "stale." The adjective is an expressive one. Gordon Cumming, in that early account of sport in South Africa—I think one of the most interesting books on the subject ever written—describes himself as deliberately eating his breakfast in full view of a herd of elephants he intended immediately to attack, and feeling far less excited than he

used to be when preparing for a day's fishing at his far-away home on the Findhorn. (He had with him in Africa an old game-bag still haunted by the scales of grilse and grouse feathers.) He was stale, though in his case monotonous and unsuitable food, as well as hard work, had something to do with his condition. When spending a winter in North Uist I averaged for some months something like five days a-week on ground difficult to walk over, and during a considerable part of the time carried a heavy double eight-bore. I was as hard as nails, as the phrase goes, able to do a long day's work, with never an ache or a pain about me; but was over-trained, and after a time did the walking, and even the shooting, with some loss of the keenness with which I began it. This want of keenness did not arise from satiety; the bags were never large, and always interesting, and if some of the travelling could have been done on a pony I should probably have enjoyed the last day's shooting as much as the first. (But a pony on North Uist bogs would have been a strange sight to see.) No wonder that these professionals, starting in October and out practically every week-day, weather permitting or not, are glad of a rest by the 1st of March. Many drenchings must they have met with; many disappointments; many dreary walks home with little in their bags.

But I am far from offering sympathy to these

people; compared with many of the ways by which men earn livelihoods in this troublesome world their lot seems to me a very enviable one; the instinct for sport is latent in most breasts, and, let moralists say what they will, is in the main a desirable and wholesome one. From how many scrapes—perhaps crimes—has the love of it preserved some of us! A man cannot be doing ill deeds when he is snipe-shooting; he can hardly do much thinking about evil things, unless, perhaps, fog tethers him to a hedge-side or a peat-hag for half a day. These fowlers love their work as well as live by it, and are to be envied rather than commiserated.

The country over which we tramped many hundreds of miles is not an easy one. There are the bogs. Then there are large tracts of "mountain" — sodden inelastic surfaces into which a tired foot sinks. But I found the fences on the higher, drier ground the most difficult of all. The rushy fields are almost invariably enclosed by high steep bramble- or whin-covered razor-backed banks; at first I used to try and jump "on and off them," but soon found that such operations, so often repeated, took far too much out of one by the end of the day. And I learnt to climb, in however laborious a fashion, to the top, and let myself as gently as possible down into the ditch on the opposite side,—a process which makes one

acquainted with many thorns. There seldom seemed to be a gate or a gap where it would be useful to us. We crossed very many such places in a long day; once, between half-past twelve and half-past four, in a typical district, we negotiated sixty-eight, so a hundred does not seem an extravagant number to put down between the start and finish. When snipe were very scarce, as they often were this season, this perpetual climbing became most wearisome. I religiously observed the good rule of carrying my gun at safety over such places, but some of the professionals with whom I shot as carefully did the reverse. They used mostly hammer guns; they always expected a snipe to get up when they were grappling with the bank; they had full confidence in themselves, and they negotiated the most fearful fences on full-cock.

I learnt many new expressions in this country: I heard of the "slob"—the mudflats by the sea where widgeon fed and flighted; of the "flash"—the little pool in the middle of the rushy flat, which latter is called the "corcass." And it was strange to one used to the great hills of the north to be told that we would try the "mountain," and then be led on to an almost mathematically level stretch of stunted heather only raised a few feet above the sea. Then there was the "red bog," to be distinguished by the colour of its grasses

from the bog proper. And I soon learnt that the depression in such a place — a depression sometimes literally to be measured in inches — was a "valley," while the trickle meandering through it —a stream which a fairy could fish with a stalk of maiden-hair—must be called a "river."

There was, especially towards nightfall, something extremely impressive about these great level stretches of bog. We were travelling homewards one November evening round the edge of such a place. I was in a chastened mood, for the sport had only been redeemed from failure by the capture of a goose. Radiantly ushered in by gentle frost, the day had gone on from strength to strength; a sun, extraordinarily powerful for the time of year, beat upon us, or flashed in our eyes at inopportune moments; never a breath had stirred the rushes or long withered grass, and snipe had been impossible, unapproachable: "there were thousands," said a lad, "getting up that wild we could never see one of them." As the sun sank down the frost reasserted itself and dimmed the glass on the motor, and a marvellous arrangement of colours began to show itself in the west. The pale blue of the upper sky faded into clear emerald green, this into primrose, then into orange and deep crimson red, while below stretched the steely indigo of the sea. It seemed as if a mighty rainbow, straight instead of curved, lay along the

horizon. On our left the purple brownness of the bog stretched itself away in level mysterious miles. This country not only looks, but really is, almost perfectly flat; when walking over it you can detect no movement in the deep ditches intersecting it, which seem to hold the black sullen water rather than drain it off. To cross it is a wearisome business, especially when snipe are scarce; there are these ditches to jump, too wide often to get certainly across with a gun, where a slip or a too short "approach" meant a wetting to the neck. Then there are tussocky, holey places hidden in long white grass, where the badly-balanced man has a poor chance if the little bird chooses that moment—as he often does—to make his shrill bleat and start on his twisting course. And here and there are bright-green quaking spots hiding bottomless depths of liquid peat.

We forgot the disappointments of the day in watching the weird effects of the swiftly falling night: before we left the neighbourhood of the bog she had closed in upon and buried it, and only tiny twinkling lights from the cottages on its border showed where it lay.

The *lingerie* of the Clare peasant often flutters and undulates on the gorse-covered ruins of dwelling-places, built in prehistoric times by a race of whom we know nothing now; the countryside is

dotted by innumerable "forts,"[1] and the people say that from any one particular fort you can always see at least two more. They are now merely open grassy spaces surrounded by a single or double line of earthen banks. These enclosures are to be counted by the hundred in the district over which I shot; they often afforded a good guide for a marked-down snipe—"over" or "in" or "to the right" of the fort. Once in a while a small gaggle of geese would settle in the neighbourhood of one, and its shelter give a chance to the sportsman to crawl near the birds. But this was not often; there was generally at any rate one watcher to poke his long offensive neck round towards the point of danger. So the twentieth-century sentinel took the place of the long-departed skin-clad people who once knew the place so well.

I was much interested in these remains of ancient days, and would have given up a good day's shooting to have been allowed to investigate one of them with a spade; but while permission from a landlord might have been easily obtained, the country people would not have tolerated anything of the kind. "They" didn't like it, "it would be unlucky," "it was better not to do it." Indeed, I soon found that unless I carried on the

[1] Murray says that there are still existing in Ireland over 28,000 of these "forts."

work at night, after the fashion of the Antiquary and the worthy Dousterswivel, I might give the idea up. Terrible tales were told me of the calamities which had invariably befallen the digger or plougher-up of a fort,—how horses so engaged always broke their legs, and the owner his neck, or at any rate some part of him, and within a twelvemonth it seemed impossible that any one who had anything to do with the business could be alive. There is another and a prettier superstition in this district: swans are looked upon as sacred. So far I have seen but one of these birds on the shooting; his wild note betrayed him, and we just caught a glimpse of his beautiful white body as he flew swiftly, at an immense height, into the sun. But at times many swans settle on the lakes. It is firmly believed by the old people, and I suspect by many of the younger generation too, that the spirits of dead maidens inhabit the bodies of the white birds, or, as it was put to me by one man, "they are angels." I was told that a stranger who shot a swan here was fortunate in escaping the angry attention of the natives, who pursued him till he got to a place of safety, "and they would have cut him to pieces if they had caught him." I did not want to run any risk of a catastrophe of this kind, nor experience the ills which would certainly pursue me if found desecrating a fort, so I reluctantly made up my

mind to interfere with neither the ruins nor the birds; and indeed the country people were so pleasant and courteous, and often so interested in my sport, that I should have been sorry to have done anything which would have ruffled or offended them.[1]

Wild geese are not useful fowl for the larder, and the mistress of a household sometimes thinks that the time spent—very often fruitlessly spent—in trying to out-manœuvre them might be more profitably occupied. An old bird of any of the tribe is certainly not a gift to send to a person with whom you wish to keep on terms of good-fellowship; a young well-hung goose, whether bernacle, grey-lag, bean, white-fronted, or brent, is very excellent food. But his capture gives me much more satisfaction than his eating; he is of all sporting birds the most thoroughly wild, and the most difficult to get hold of. I have never had the good fortune to shoot in the famous English and Welsh preserves where in suitable weather sport is more or less of a certainty. My work in this way has always been most uncertain, and if I had devoted the time I have given up in fruitlessly pursuing them to doing good works I should be a better, and I have no doubt a happier, man. And yet I have got a good deal of happiness even

[1] I have shot, but only as specimens, Whooper and Bewick swans in Uist and Donegal.

out of unsuccessful days; the anticipation has had keen pleasure in it; the dreams of making extraordinary shots have been exhilarating, even though they may never have come off. Perhaps most sportsmen have a sort of scale in their minds as to the value of the different game-birds. I would assess a woodcock at two snipe, not more. I would sooner shoot forty snipe in a day than two hundred pheasants or a hundred grouse, and I think I would put down a goose, of whatever kind, at twenty snipe. But this latter estimate would be for a single bird now and then; six hundred snipe would be worth a great deal more than twenty geese. There is a romance about this great bird which is wanting in all the others; he comes from so far; his home is so mysterious and unknown. The grey-lag breeds in the north of Scotland, but of the others we know little, except what we see here; no man has ever handled the egg of a bernacle in its native country. In a late number of 'The Spectator,' in a review of a new edition of Pope, the following lines are quoted as being those which "the poet declared best satisfied him in the whole of his works"—

> "Lo! where Moetis sleeps, and hardly flows
> The frozen Tanais through a waste of snows."

"What a picture," the reviewer adds, "of vast and shivering desolation!" This is the kind of

*An Irish Snipe-bog.*

*Bishop's Island, Coast of Clare, an inaccessible haunt of White-fronted Geese.*

J. Bothwell, Kilkee.

country which the wild geese fly from in autumn to visit us. With almost clockwork regularity they may be looked for here; unless fate puts them in the line of a heavy gun they probably come southwards for many years, for all the tribe are long-lived. Their cunning and experience, their strong bones, and sinews toughened by thousands of miles of flight, and the dense protecting breastplate of feathers, made them formidable opponents and trophies far above any other birds.

Geese in this part of Ireland are particularly difficult to capture. I once devoted the best part of a winter to pursuing them in the island of North Uist, and killed about eighty. They were often very ill to get at there, and many laborious days and craftily-laid plans ended in disappointment; but we had the sea to work on, and innumerable islands, great and small, and patience and very careful stalking sometimes gave us a heavy shot. Here the sea is useless; geese rest at night on one or two of the green-topped islands off the coast, but you can do nothing with them. You cannot get out to the islands. One of them is called after a bishop who, some thousand years ago, lived in the strange beehive-looking dwelling I used often to examine with a glass. Then the extreme flatness of the country which I have so often referred to makes stalking very difficult.

The first goose I got with the twelve-bore by chance when snipe-shooting; late in the afternoon he came high over me with half-a-dozen companions, and I had time to change the number eight for number two.

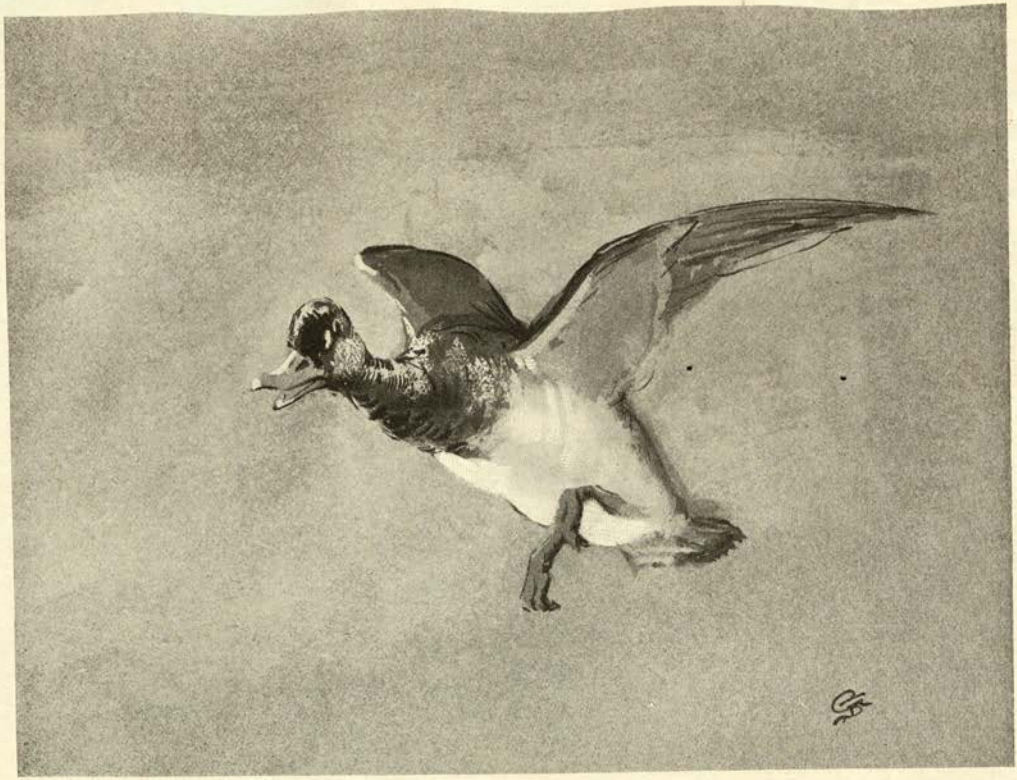
Then another night,' after long watching and waiting, we tried a drive. Geese have been little hunted in this district; the professionals in their open country seldom see them, and I think most of them would as soon kill a snipe as a grey-lag. But Coleman, the head man on this part of the shooting, had a good general idea of their lines of flight, and this evening he showed remarkable strategical skill. The birds had settled on a perfectly flat mountain, and when I took up my position in a little hollow a mile or so away from them I thought the chance of a shot was really hardly worth estimating. They had all the world to go to; the little lake behind us was solidly frozen; the flat beyond it, where they often fed and rested, was so large that they could reach it by a hundred lines and yet be far away from me. But they came right over us; it was a cold, still night; they made as if they would pass far to my left; then they swung round and came straight to the hiding-place. It was a fine sight, I thought, to see their stately advance; there were perhaps fifty of them; they came in a long thin line instead of a triangle; the quiet air kept them

very high, but I got a right and left with the big gun: one fell as far off as we could see, and we lost him in the night; the other dropped a quarter of a mile away, and I was in an agony that, without a dog, we should lose him too. But just when I was beginning to get fretful and hopeless Hall's sharp eye caught him crouching in the thick cover, and we carried him off in triumph.

Two days later we found a great many geese on a large lake. I had with me John Dillon, one of the "sportsmen." Coleman and I made a long detour, and got what shelter we could by wading out to some tall bulrushes at the head of the lake; while Dillon, who would far rather have continued his snipe-shooting, reluctantly went to put them up. We stood on firm though water-covered ground; a foot from the reeds we were safe; move a foot into them, and you would probably sink out of sight in the quagmire; wherever bulrushes grow there is danger. Though the chance seemed a poor one, Coleman's instinct again served me well, and I got a huge gander with the first barrel, and was nearly knocked into the morass by the recoil of the second. Again it was calm, and they came high. The goose fell into the shallow water with a splash, such as a sack of potatoes might make if it was dropped from the clouds.

I do not know if the matter has been noticed by other sportsmen, but it seems to me that the

eyesight of the average Irishman is better than that of his brethren in the north and east. I was especially struck by this when stalking in Donegal. The head man, who came from Ross-shire, had told me that some of our gillies were possessed of extraordinary vision, but I was surprised at what I saw. This was the more remarkable, for none of these men had been long accustomed to deer; they had not been brought up amongst them as Scotch gillies usually are. Their sight was far clearer than that of the Scotsmen; and they could pick up a stag on an autumn-stained hill in a way that was wonderful to me, and sometimes a little humiliating. Here all the keepers and watchers were possessed of extremely good sight, and could follow every twist and turn of a snipe to a very great distance. Many hours altogether I must have spent in an uncomfortable squatted position, first watching the bird and then the men, wondering how many times they were going to turn round and round, first to one point of the compass and then to another. Very often the bird was marked. Sometimes, after endless wheelings, he would come back to the field which he had started from. And the marking was most accurate: there was no guess-work or haphazardness about it. Far or near, you were led to the place where the snipe had dropped: he might rise wide enough from it, but he had been there.



*"Mark that Bird!"*

For picking up a dead bird, I have never seen any keepers half so good. Here, on this spot and no other, the bird came down, and often the tufts of grass behind some mark that had been taken several fields away were carefully divided with the hand, so certain was the watcher that he was right. Neither did the men lose their bearings if we did not go straight for the snipe. Coleman, Hall, Martin and Connor O'Brien, all had this gift. I may give two instances, occurring the day before I write, which illustrate this. I shot a mallard, which fell dead a good distance away. The marsh in front was so treacherous that it was impossible to walk straight to it: we had to make a long round to get across a deep stream, and approach the place from the opposite direction. Cautiously feeling the ground beneath us, we made our way into a dense mass of reeds. I think I never felt surroundings more dismal or a quest more hopeless: the rain was coming down heavily, and a strong gale of wind was tearing through the eight-feet-high bulrushes, and crashing their brittle stems together. We could only see a few yards through them here and there, and the ground was so rotten that every step had to be carefully taken. Balanced on unhealthy-looking half-submerged tufts, I now and then feebly divided the reeds with my gun-barrels, and heartily wished I had missed the duck. Then Coleman,

peering about, spied it, just where he expected, and with some difficulty got to it.

I had a young friend with me that day, a keen sportsman and a good shot, bearing the name of the old founder of 'Maga.' An hour or so later we watched a small flock of geese take up a quite unapproachable position in the middle of a rushy flat. He, with the men, made a wide circle and got on the farther side of them, and good luck and good guidance led me to the comfortable shelter of a furze-covered knoll. The first shot he fired put the geese up, and they came almost straight for the hiding-place. I did nothing with the first barrel of the eight-bore, and was fortunate in knocking over two with the second: the birds were high, and with the gale behind them travelled at an amazing pace. One fell stone-dead some 100 yards away, and the other, winged, came down in dense cover farther on by the side of a lake. Coleman marked it, splashed through some horrible soft ground, got beyond it, and then came back to the exact spot where the hiding bird was. These were two instances of accurate marking. This was the most remarkable shot I have ever fired, for one of the geese was a bernacle and the other a white-fronted, and I question if I shall ever again kill two species of the Ansers with one cartridge.

Connor O'Brien, an old "sportsman," who looked

after part of the shooting, was very clever in calling Golden Plover, imitating their cry so naturally that he would sometimes bring a high-flying bird right down to the gun.

"Scolopax," the author of 'A Book of the Snipe,'[1] gives an immense amount of valuable and interesting information as to the habits of, and the best way of securing, the little bird. If I had to select one bit of advice more full of wisdom than another in that charming treatise, I would pick out the axiom which lays down that the best number for making a good bag is a "select little party of one." Just as a man who knows his ground, and can both stalk and use a rifle, has a great superiority over the usual combination of stalker and shooter, so in the low country he who combines the same sort of qualifications will be successful when a larger party fails. To know the habits of a snipe, his favourite ground, the likely place in that ground where he will be on that particular day, and then to be able to shoot him when he gets up, are advantages which can hardly be over-estimated. All men of experience who write about this bird—Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey and the authorities in 'Fur and Feather' and the Badminton, to give only modern instances—touch on this. The amateur

[1] A Book of the Snipe. By "Scolopax." William Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh and London.

will beat the whole of a promising field; the professor, whether gentle or simple, visits one or two places in it, and if he finds nothing there passes on, no matter how "smittle," to use an expressive Cumberland word, the rest of the field appears. The amateur follows up his setter when pointing as he would if after grouse, or perhaps goes ahead of it. The other man goes ahead too, but often far away from the dog; experience has taught him the most likely spot where that snipe will be, or which way the wind will turn him when he rises. Two is a good number for a party also: most men want some one with them to carry lunch and cartridges, and at times lead a dog, but two will not, when the birds are wild, get so many shots as one. This is where the professionals score: they carry what they want themselves, and shoot invariably alone, and they get snipe when others fail. They move more quietly and are less observed. It is a pleasure to read everything that "Scolopax" says in the book I have referred to; he treats his quarry all through as being what he once calls him, "a perfect little gentleman."

"Scolopax," like all the other writers on the subject, discusses the pros and cons of walking after snipe with, or against, the wind; it is a matter which can be argued about for ever. For my own part, I would never if I could help it

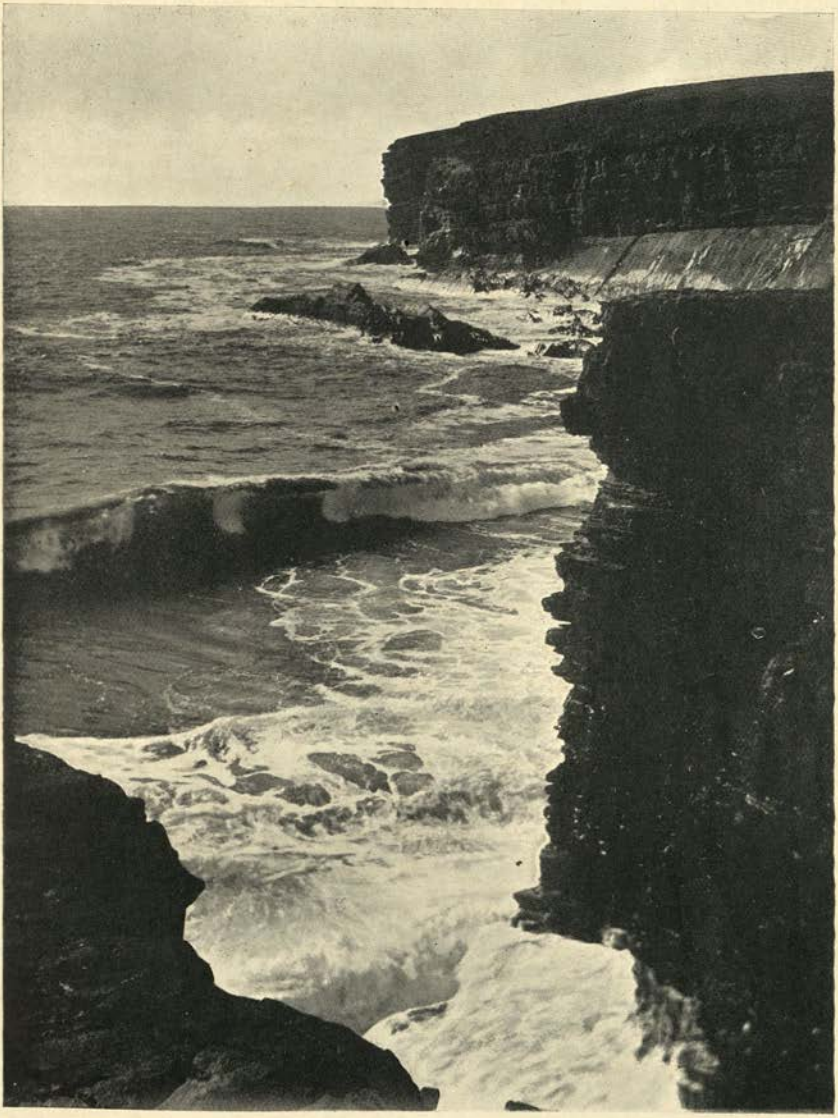
shoot except down wind, and the stronger it is the more important it seems to me to go with it. With dogs or without,—provided they are well-trained ones, following up a marked bird, and, with some small reservation here, following a wounded bird,—I would keep the wind in my back if I could. I differ, with some diffidence, from this authority on the point of reloading at once, or waiting "for half a minute or so with the left barrel only charged." But with powerful ejectors the reloading is done so swiftly, and the second cartridge gives so much additional confidence, that in this respect I do not follow his advice. And more emphatically and with much greater confidence, I demur to his suggestion about an important part of the luncheon. "For drink, a flask of claret; spirits are clammy on the marshes." When suffering cold from frost it is known that the latter are unsafe, but when cold from damp I would let who would have the flask so long as I had—in strict moderation—the whisky.

# SNIPE-SHOOTING.

## II.

### SNIPE AND WILDFOWL SHOOTING IN THE WEST OF IRELAND.

WEATHER is so intimately connected with snipe-shooting that I need hardly apologise for referring to it, but it is not an interesting topic, and I will make only one good growl and have done with it. From our point of view it was—up to Christmas at any rate—deplorable; one calm mellow day succeeded another; one week without almost a breath of wind followed another week: "A fine day, thank God!" was the daily greeting of the country folk. I waited once for more than a month before I got a suitable—a fairly rough—day to move the duck on the lakes. Under the influence of this premature spring a good many birds left the district; why they did so I never could understand; they had fine and ample feed-



*The March of the Snipe-ground, Atlantic Coast of Clare.*

J. Bothwell, Kilkee.

ing-grounds, and they were not disturbed here more than in other places; in the "preserves" they were often not disturbed at all. All we wanted was ordinary rough winter weather, with a little touch of frost now and then, which did not seem very much to expect at this time of the year. The Atlantic lay on our flank; our nearest neighbour on the west lived in Newfoundland. The Atlantic was rough enough at times, but it was from wind perhaps hundreds of miles outside; it was quite a common thing to see a very heavy sea thundering in among the rocks on that dangerous coast on days when on the mainland there was hardly a zephyr blowing with strength enough to put out a match. The fine weather brought other troubles in its train: it is strange to think that iron ore, dug out of Cumberland or Lancashire fellsides, or floated over from the mines on the Bidassoa, should interfere with a man shooting snipe in Ireland; and when I was told that the basic slag used by the farmers here did harm, I paid little attention to the warning. There were so many fields. But then there are so many farms. This slag, a product of the blast-furnaces, is sold at a low price at the seaports along the coast, and sown in winter to a large extent over the coarse grass land,—sown so liberally often, that the passer-by through places so treated raises a little cloud of evil grey dust at every step.

Then owing to the dry summer there was a scarcity of bedding, and the fine weather tempted farmers to get a scythe into their rushes wherever they could, and the cover became poorer as the season drew on. The snipe shooter of older days knew nothing of such troubles. So the weather, and the basic slag, and industrious mowers did us much harm, but especially the weather.

When snipe were very plentiful with us they lay badly; I think they do not often "wait" well under such circumstances: there are, in a multitude, sure to be some wild ones which communicate their fears to the crowd. I used to watch with great interest the way in which the little bird got the better of the man who was hunting him. He often offered himself a quick though fair shot as he skimmed over a bank. But now and then we came across a professor, a master of the art of dodging; such a one would rise, top the bank, just grazing it, disappear on the opposite side, and only show himself, right or left, when a couple of gunshots away: in such cases the bird performed at amazing speed a perfect figure of the letter ∩ reversed, and I think the quickest and most accurate performer with a breech-loader would seldom be able to do anything with him. Great indeed must be the concentrated power that lies in that tiny body: one lightning whisk, a bit of unerring calculation not

to strike the grass or thorns—not be an inch over them,—and the movement is carried out. And wonderful must be the little brain which takes in the situation so swiftly and acts with such extraordinary promptitude.

Halloran has a good expression for birds which get up in a more becoming fashion—"he rose lubberly" (we were not plagued by many of this breed). The adjective exactly describes the heavy woodcock-in-the-open sort of flight; for far too much of the season a quick snap-shot had to be taken or it was no use firing at all. The professionals *always* carried their guns at the "ready," if that is the right expression to use: it is an ugly fashion, almost an unsportsmanlike one to look at, but after a week or two I adopted it, and continued it whenever there was a chance of a shot. It was tiring at first, but the muscles of the arm soon accustomed themselves to the unusual strain, and it gave one a great advantage over a far-rising bird. Sport was so very uncertain that I put off most of the guns who were coming to help me; to bring men out many hundreds of miles and only to be able to *show* them snipe was a trying and uncomfortable position for a host. Some ran the risk in spite of warnings: one, who undertook the long troublesome journey from Cumberland, was a very fine shot at all kinds of game, and he extorted the admiration of the

fowlers by the rapid way in which—carrying his gun in his left hand—he was able to bring it to bear on a far-rising snipe. He left me three days too soon, and had a poor return for his wearisome journey.

No doubt one of the great charms of this kind of shooting is the variety of chances given. To go out every day, ten or eleven days often in a fortnight, for two or three months together, in pursuit of ordinary game, would be an irksome business: grouse, partridges, covert-shooting, they would all pall; and stalking, and even salmon-fishing, carried on for so long, would, I think, become utterly distasteful. But I never got tired of the snipe or of my very moderate bags; and I could even have wished the long season longer.

And how small our bags were, compared to those of older times; forty-three to three guns was my best day. I got within a fraction of 800 during the season, and worked very hard for them. It is tantalising to think what could be done even so late as in the 'Seventies in the west of Ireland; this is what Colonel Peyton, a well-known shot, says in a letter to Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey, quoted in 'The Fowler in Ireland': "In Kerry I could always get 20 to 25 couple of snipe when I wanted to make a bag, but my average was about 17." In five consecutive days in December-January 1878-79 he

killed 265 snipe. His best day was in 1871, when, on Lord Ventry's property, he got 51 couple. "It was a common expression among shooters then," wrote Colonel Peyton in 1882, "to say 'I never shoot a jack.' Now I never let a jack off if I can hèlp it; . . . in former days we never thought of marking any snipe down; *now* I turn back a quarter of a mile to a marked bird, whether it be jack or common."

October 1909 was a useless month in Clare, and so were the last fourteen days of February, and I lost also what would have been a profitable ten days in January owing to election considerations: with a better—stormier—November and December I think I could easily have made out 500 couple. What could have been done in this part of the Kingdom a hundred years ago by a man armed with the weapons of modern days! In snipe, Ireland has now lost her supremacy; that must—as far as the United Kingdom is concerned—be given to Tiree. Everything is relative, and it may be—almost certainly will be—the case that sportsmen will look back upon our days, which seem to us so degenerate, as interesting and wonderful. Snipe-shooting must soon fall far below even its present level in the Green Island; this is as certain as anything well can be: the handwriting is on the wall—in the fields—very plain to read. The

land of Ireland will in a very measurable time belong to the people of Ireland; great properties are being broken up; every year this is taking place, and fifty or a hundred, or perhaps several hundreds, of farmers will own the shooting of an estate which now is in the hands of one man. They may try to preserve it; they may see, most of them, that it is their interest to preserve, but there can never be complete unanimity: every farmhouse has a gun in it now, and even if snipe were not made a definite object of pursuit, there will always be lads on the look-out for a plover or curlew or possible hare, and the little game-birds would be continually disturbed. A preserve, if it is not too large, especially if it is long and narrow, acts as a reservoir, a sort of sanctuary, and the professionals gain by having such places here and there in the middle of their open ground: I think they quite recognise this. No doubt in some of the vast bogs in the west, remote from houses, snipe will always exist, but for the perfection of shooting you want more than bogs and mountain; you require the "land," as the enclosed fields are called, also.

Halloran's bags in good years are referred to in the 'Badminton' and other books on sport. His best day this season was 29 snipe; his best day for the thirty odd years he had shot was at the end of December 1906, when, on open ground, he

*John Dillon, "Sportsman."*

*William Hall, our Factotum.*

*Connor O'Brien, "Sportsman."*

*Joseph Coleman, a Clare Keeper.*

killed 46 snipe and 13 cock. He has a very pretty specimen of a white or very light-coloured snipe in his house: such a variety must be rare, for it is the only one he has secured, or even seen. While on the subject of white birds, I may add that we saw one day, among some twenty grey geese, one that was distinctly white. This lot was not more than a hundred yards from us, and as one of the men said, "It was white as it came up and when it passed." We kept anxious eyes on all the geese met with for the rest of the season, but never saw the stranger again. I know the bernacle too well to have made a mistake about him, and I cannot but think it was a snow-goose which for a moment swam into our ken: this rare bird has been shot in Ireland, and it is hard to say what trouble I would not have taken to have got a chance at it. Another white bird was a mature and very fine specimen of a Greenland falcon which was given to me: he was shot on the sea cliffs not far from our headquarters, and seems to have been known there for a considerable time. I was sorry to look at this dead splendid bird, and would gladly have saved his life if I could have done it.

One or other of the professionals sometimes came out with me, and I learnt many things from them. The names of Denny Lynch, Macmahon, John Dillon, and "Patsy" Halloran are well known in the west: of the two former I saw

little, their beats were well away from mine, but I knew that they were good and keen sportsmen. Connor O'Brien had ceased to shoot for the market, but he is as keen as ever when he does go out: many a pleasant day I had with him, and many a long "crack" as a Cumberland man would say. John Dillon was, I think, the keenest "shooter-body"—to use another north country expression—I have ever met: he was sometimes a source of anxiety to me; I never knew quite where to have him. We would start, one on each side of a great, rough, not-to-be-seen-over hedge, stretching for some hundreds of yards. I used to finish my part of the work in the expectation that my companion was at any rate somewhere within shot of the other side, but often that was anything but the case; a tempting corner, far away, was in his mind's eye when he started, and there I would hear his shot. The insinuating manner in which he always explained the desirability, if not the absolute necessity, of his taking the course he did would have disarmed the most rigid martinet. But the only times I really fell out with him was when he declined to take shelter—what miserable shelter there might be—when we were pursuing small game, and geese came suddenly in sight. That whole tribe bored him: of shooting snipe he was never weary, but he looked upon bernacle or white-

*Patrick Halloran, a famous Professional Snipe-shot.*

fronted as creatures likely to interfere with the legitimate sport of his life. After a fashion he was right: it is useless and absurd to crouch down and attempt to hide when geese have once seen you; they are far more likely to come over you if you walk boldly on.

Halloran often said he was tired of shooting, he had been at it for so many years. I never noticed any want of energy; I should be very sorry for any man, not in the hardest condition, who had to walk with him, or against him, on a long day. He possesses all the qualifications which are necessary for one engaged in this particular occupation. Spare in flesh, long in limb, untiring in his stride, he can get over an extent of country in a week which an average walker, even in first-rate training, would find impossible, or, if he accomplished it, it would be at the expense of his shooting and of any satisfaction in his work. Far-seeing and trained accurate eyes enable him to add to his bag many a snipe which the average performer would overlook.

Long study had taught Halloran, as also the other professionals, where their snipe would most likely be; not close in front of the dog, not near the dog, not perhaps in front of the dog at all: when his own faithful little setter was standing he would walk well away from her, perhaps a hundred yards or more, and the odds were he

got the chance. Sometimes when he marked a wild bird down he would get me to go and stand at a particular part of a fence, far away from it,—"not to that furze bush or that, but to the one between,"—and then put it up, and as a rule if I did not kill it the fault was my own. I have seen Halloran, like the other fowlers, now and then miss a good chance; this is only to say they are mortals. This happened more towards the end of the season, and I believe was in a great measure caused by that state of staleness to which I have referred (and the fowlers were unused to shooting in company, and I think were at their best when alone). But the misses were few and far between; the man who bet against the gun here would have made but a poor livelihood. I have sometimes seen him kill every real chance he got in a long day, and in addition get a few birds which an impartial watcher would hardly say *were* chances. He shot very quickly; and often fired without stopping or breaking his stride.

It may be said very emphatically of snipe that on any particular day they represent an unknown quantity; in hard frost they may not be found near apparently suitable springs; when cold searching winds are blowing, and you look for them in rough warm cover, it is perhaps only late in the afternoon that you discover they are

sitting well on bare "mountain." On a Monday each rushy swampy field gives its contribution, and when next morning, high in hope, the sportsman beats the same ground, he finds nothing but the everlasting starling. This is provoking enough, but worse things may happen: with little or no reason, as far as you can see, they vanish altogether, and only a meagre percentage of yesterday's ample stock of birds are to be found anywhere. Woodcock are fickle, but all other kinds of game act on well-defined lines; grouse and partridges may be wild, but you can at any rate see them if you take the trouble to go after them; pheasants, when well looked after, are always to be met with; wildfowl do not desert their lakes and ponds without good reason. No doubt it is this uncertainty of finding them, and their evasive, elusive habits, which make the pursuit of snipe so fascinating; nothing can be done to tempt them or attract them; no expenditure can keep them: here they are to-day, and to-morrow who can say how many hundreds of miles of land and sea separate you from them. The snipe is one of the swiftest birds that flies; it is nothing to him to show himself to anxious men on a muggy evening in the west of Ireland, and the following morning be rising out of shot before indignant trampers over Welsh or Norfolk marshes.

Now and then a day stands out prominently before a sportsman, to be looked back on and remembered for many years, marked with the whitest of stones: there is no need to refer to a shooting diary; every little incident comes back clearly defined to the participator in it. The place where he lunched, the way the wind blew in the afternoon; the fortune which led him to the right place, and gave him a second chance at the best stag of his life after he had miserably thrown away the first; which befriended him when the heaviest salmon he had ever had to do with seemed certainly going to be the conqueror in a long uphill fight: you can repeat the very words with which Norway gaffer or Highland stalker parted with you at night. And of all this the reverse is equally true, though the average man is happily more prone to look back on pleasant things.

One particularly unfortunate day in this season will long remain in my memory. There was on the shooting a lake about half a mile long, narrow, twisting, bordered by acres of tall bulrushes and reeds. This was the home of many ducks, mallard, widgeon, shovellers, and I daresay rarer birds. There were often geese on it, and many teal. A hundred or more teal would sweep round it when disturbed, wheeling with rapid precision, every bird showing his white

*White-fronted Geese.*

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breast and brown back in unanimous and wonderful regularity at the same instant of time. Half a mile away there was a wide flat, more or less flooded according to the state of the weather, separated from the lake by a little bit of rising ground. We used to move the duck from one place to the other, hiding in blinds, and generally got a few shots, but the space to be covered was wide, and I never had enough guns to work it properly. On stormy days the duck were unwilling to leave the lakes, and for some time they would fly backwards and forwards between them. I thought, if a boat could be got on to the larger of the two lakes, and well hidden among the bulrushes, that the man in it might get a good deal of shooting. The idea was to put the duck up quietly without firing a shot, get into the right place, and then spend a few hours watching for birds which would come in of their own accord, and for others which the men might move from the small pools and flashes scattered here and there among the bogs. In a high wind the shots fired would be little heard.

So with some trouble a flat-bottomed kind of a punt was conveyed to the scene of action: then I had to wait—such was the baffling serenity of the winter weather—for some weeks before the scheme could be put in operation. Our plan was to shoot snipe on the open mountain in the morning,

beginning some miles away from the lakes; then, after an early lunch, my companion was to continue his pursuit of the scolopax, while I tried my fortune in the ambush. We made a mistake at the very outset, though this was not our fault: the wind veered round to the south, and instead of having it, as we expected, on the flank, a side wind, we had to fight against it all the morning. It was blowing more than half a gale, and the experienced snipe-shooter will know what this meant: the birds got up wild and gave poor chances, and the bag at midday was a small one. But long before twelve o'clock the first of our misfortunes fell upon us. On this flat mountain beat I always had a man with me, carrying a big gun; there were often geese resting on it, and occasionally, for some reason I have never been able to explain, they would fly over the snipe-shooters, though generally too high to be of any service: perhaps they took the little company for harmless people concerned about their turf. This particular morning I was not sure if I could get hold of the gun-bearer, and I let the eight-bore go on to the rendezvous near the lakes.

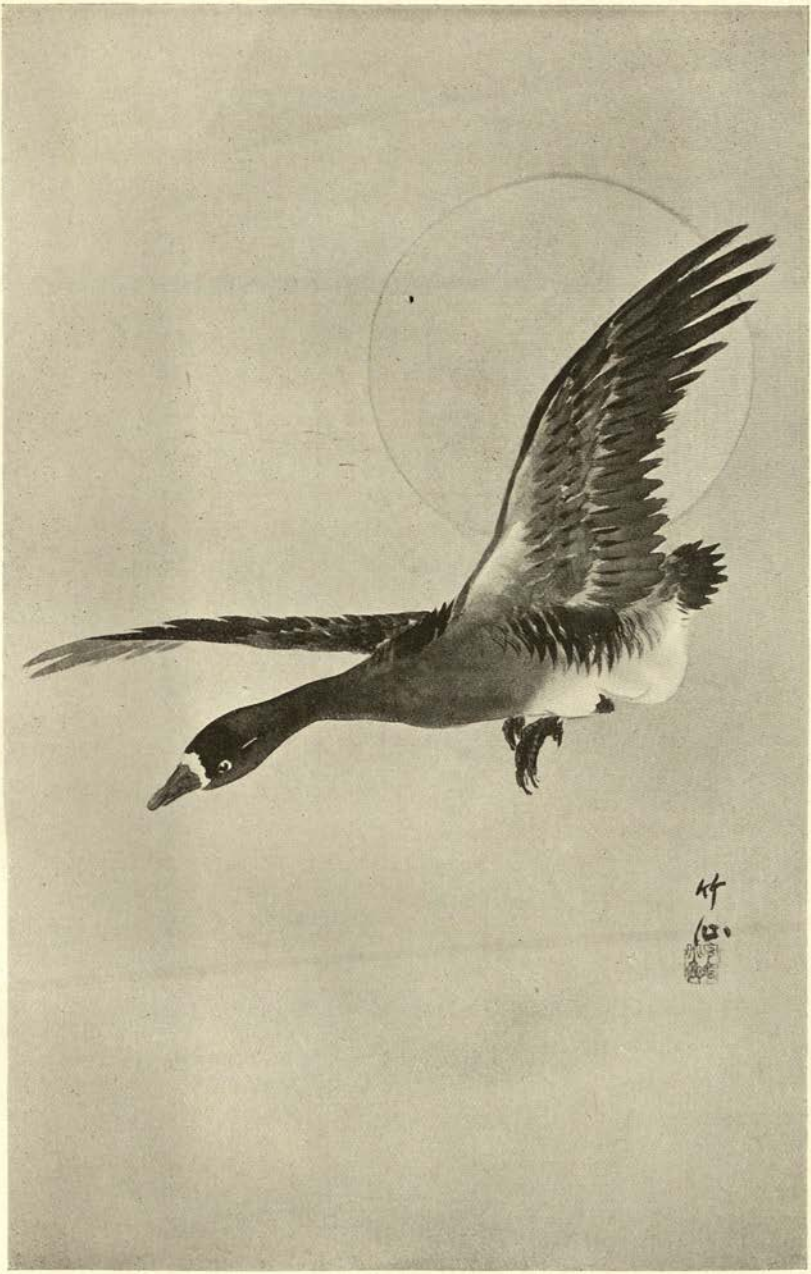
We were struggling up against the wind with bent backs and eyes full of tears, when suddenly I heard a cry of "geese!" and we saw a small lot coming straight for us—there might be a score of them: they came on and flew over my head, too

high for the small gun—though within range of the eight-bore. This was provoking enough; but while I was watching them unconcernedly beating up against the storm, and thinking what a stupid mistake I had made, the warning shout was repeated, and there, to leeward, the sky was thickly lined with geese. There must have been well over a hundred in this second lot, and they too came on and passed about fifty yards from me, going slowly, well bunched together: a blind man could have done something with them if he had had the proper weapon. That was a chance that might hardly occur again, in such an open place, for many winters. I fired my miserable little cartridges at the nearest bird, and watched the flock disappear with a disgust I cannot set down on paper.

Then we struggled on to the lakes, and it was a sore and angry and chilly man, ready to quarrel with any one who gave him a chance, who bolted his sandwiches there behind a peat-stack. "Faith, your honour 'll make up for it yet; it'll be scores of ducks you'll be getting this afternoon. He's a grate baste, the goose." Such were the consolations of the men. The plan of campaign was settled on: one Coleman was to move the duck on the flooded flat, another to go round the lake proper and try and put up what settled on it. Then I and the faithful Hall embarked in the boat,

with big gun and little gun, and cartridges enough to kill half the wildfowl in the parish if they were rightly used. The mover of the far-away duck was to give us plenty of time to get to our hiding-place; he was out of our sight owing to the rising ground. Within five minutes of leaving the shore we ought to have been well hidden in the cover, and I should, I think, have had an interesting and profitable afternoon's work.

When the straggling lots of mallard and widgeon began to come in over the lake, it was little wonder that they swerved swiftly with one accord to the right or the left of what they saw. We ran aground; the lake was very shallow; though the punt only drew a few inches, it would not float over the hardly submerged tufts of grass; we did not know the channel, if channels there were in that nightmare of a place; far away from the friendly shelter of the reeds we sat hopeless and helpless, and, I suppose, gnashed our teeth. No shoving or pushing, no coaxing or trying to trim the boat, was of any use; we sat there and watched ducks and widgeon come straight for us and then turn aside, and great flocks of teal flash past a hundred and fifty yards away. Nothing came near us; the most confiding and unsophisticated of birds would hardly venture within shot of two men hunched up in a flat-bottomed



*White-fronted Goose.*

From a sketch bought in Japan.

punt, surrounded by open and undisguised instruments of slaughter.

The courts of wildfowl in that district must have resounded with anserine laughter as its members went over and related to each other the incidents of the afternoon: it was indeed a humiliating experience. This was, I think, the most disastrous day I have ever had with a gun, and no one was to blame for it but myself. The change of wind could not have been foreseen; but I should have had the eight-bore with me at any cost, and an experimental expedition with that punt ought certainly to have been made. The bag that day was some half-dozen snipe and a couple of mallard, and I did not like to think what it might have been. The country was so very flat that driving was the only way by which duck could be got: I did not, during this whole season, get a shot at either them or the geese by stalking.

During the last week of the season we experimented with a "kite." For partridges and wild grouse this apparatus is sometimes useful, but I had never flown one over snipe. It was a little difficult to manipulate on the enclosed ground, but on the bog and mountain it worked satisfactorily, and on one occasion it did not touch the ground from ten in the morning till we stopped at dusk. Kept far and high in front of the gun it certainly

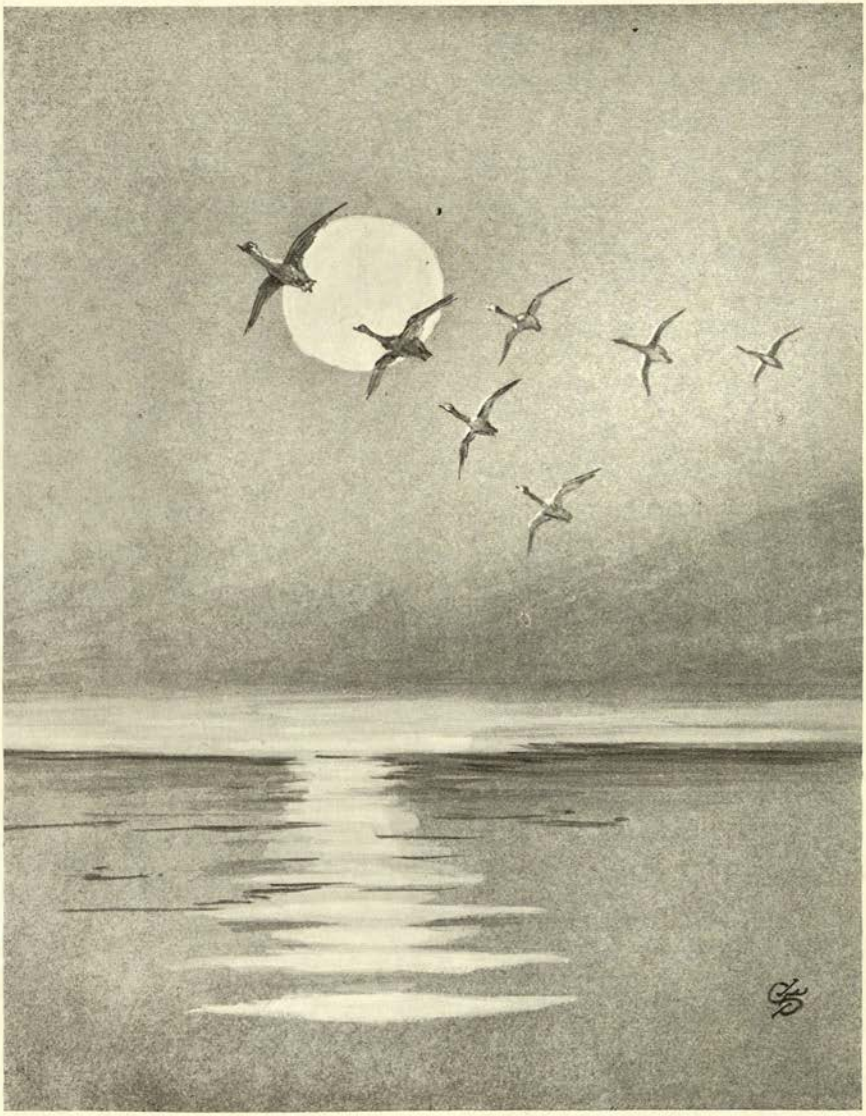
made the wild birds lie, and we, of course, had the advantage of always coming on them downwind: they sat to dogs, then sometimes on perfectly bare places; when the kite was flown low they often rose out of shot. But we hardly gave it a sufficient trial. I believe that during the little winter frosts this artificial bird would have enabled us to come to terms with many snipe which then easily outwitted us, though possibly those which escaped might have been chary of returning to ground over which it had been worked. It would be interesting to know if shooting snipe under a kite has ever been tried on a large scale and has been successful.

Unless in very exceptional weather—after some days of snow—our district was not a good one for cock. This is little to be wondered at; for there is no wood—not half a dozen acres on the whole shooting. We picked up a few on the heather and from the straggling fences on the "land." But they were to be met with in great abundance not far away. I shot with one of my landlords in January, and found that long-continued snapping at snipe was not good practice for his tall pheasants. We got thirty woodcock one day, chiefly out of a curious hazel covert growing on a great ridge of limestone rock. The first time this place was shot this season sixty-two cock were killed before luncheon, and twenty afterwards.

There was not, as far as I could see, a square foot of ground here into which a bird could get his bill; but it lay well, and the soft rocks kept the warmth of the sun. There they spent the day, and at night flighted out to the wet country round about to feed. Primroses grew here in great abundance, and some were to be gathered even so early in the year.

The country in which we lived for some five months is not without its troubles, but our part of it was "quiet." I made the acquaintance of a good many farmers, large and small, and they treated me with the greatest hospitality. The Englishman, always wet, often cold, who nightly invaded their houses and soiled their floors with his muddy boots and dripping dogs, was sure to meet with a kindly welcome. I shall long remember the huge roaring turf-fire by which I changed soaked stockings, and the interest invariably shown in the doings of the day. And I owe a real debt of gratitude to the feminine portion of these households for their attention, and for the good-humour with which they put up with the trouble and inconvenience I must often have caused. I seldom had anything I could leave behind me in the shape of game: their geese were much better than mine—to eat; hares and snipe none of the country-folk cared for, and I did not kill a dozen rabbits during the whole season.

Many a pleasant chat I had with these Clare people—on sport and farming and horses and local superstitions; we even touched on the dangerous subject of politics and religion. All the men I had more immediately to deal with—the keepers and watchers and car-drivers (I spent very many hours on the road)—were keen and willing and hard-working, and invariably hopeful under the most depressing circumstances. I remember once standing with a companion gun on a bare bit of green Scotch mountain in the dusk of a drenching winter afternoon. Sport had been extremely bad that day, and we were only anxious to get home and forget the weary tramp we had been engaged in. Sweeping his arms towards the useless, hopeless-looking country before him, the keeper tried to cheer us. "If we're living and spared," he announced, "we'll have some good shooting here —next season." I often thought of that Highlander's well-meant bit of encouragement—for which we nearly shot him at the time. But hopefulness at all times is a good fault.



*"Across the Moon."*

# AN IRISH DEER-FOREST.

THERE are two deer-forests in the south of Ireland famous for the weight of their stags and for the bags of woodcock yearly given up by their great larch woods. In the extreme north-west of the island there is a third, not so well known. This latter forest is divided into two fairly equal portions by a long glen. On its north side the hills rise quickly; in places they rise in sheer precipices, on the face of which neither man nor deer can pass. The opposite side of the glen is covered by thick primeval-looking woods, chiefly oak, mixed with a great many hollies and a fair sprinkling of yew and juniper. How plentifully the hollies grow here cannot be seen till the leaf has fallen; then their deep greens show everywhere among the dull browns and greys and purples of the hard wood. These woods stand on a chaos of huge boulders densely carpeted with moss, and are most difficult

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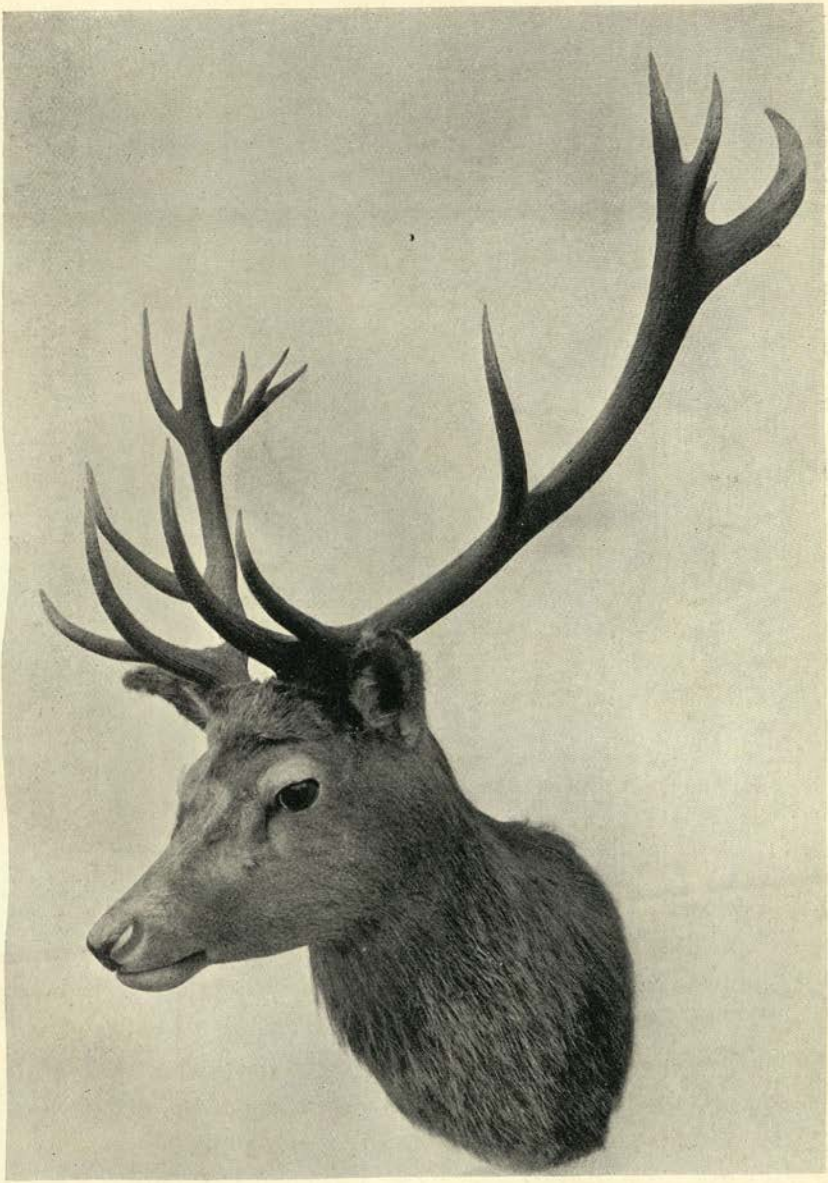
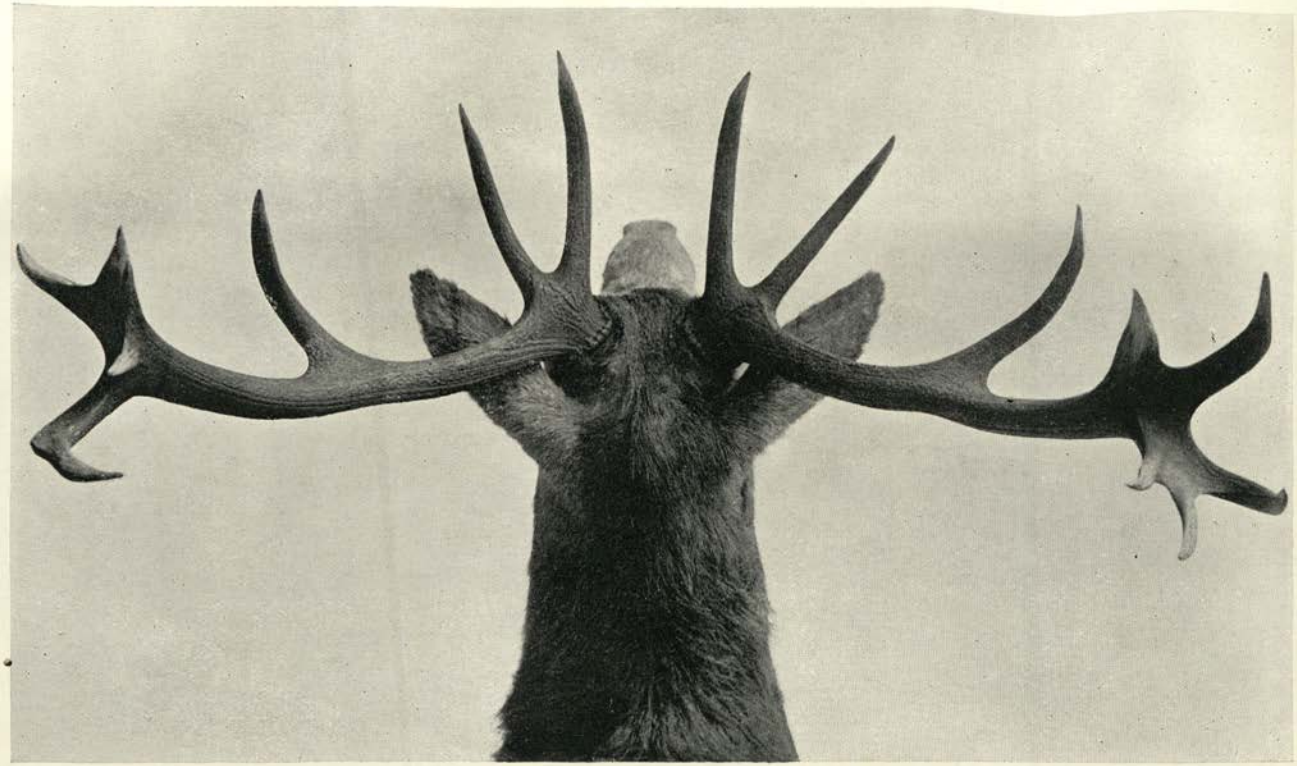
and trying to travel through; but there is little reason for ever going into them, and their recesses are, and probably always have been, almost unexplored. Where they open out towards the west birch takes the place of the oaks, and then come stretches of the rankest and longest heather I have ever seen: we found some bits nine feet long, measured without any root.

*Getting near.*

A Scotch stalker would not at first be conscious of much difference in his surroundings among these Irish hills: they are seemingly just those he would associate with the ground on which he was accustomed to work in the North. But there are differences, and one is sure to be brought very speedily and very prominently before the traveller —or behind him—if the nails in his shoes are not both large and new. The peat is often quite



*A good* 15*-Pointer—weight* 20 *st.* 4 *lb.*



*The* 15-*Pointer.*

destitute of grit, and in wet weather becomes exceedingly greasy and slippery and difficult to walk on: a pony cannot be taken on the hills, and in most cases could hardly travel "empty," much less with a twenty-stone stag on his back. Then the flora is different; the Osmunda grows luxuriantly by the rivers and lonely lakes, and saxifrages, which I have never met before in a wild state, cover great masses of rock face. As a contrast to the royal fern, its tiny "filmy" brother creeps over mossy stones in the shady woods. Golden eagles — two only, and I fear both of the same sex — take their toll of the stout mountain hares; wild swans, both whooper and Bewick, haunt the lakes in the winter; great flocks of exceedingly wary geese tear up the withered grass on the flats; falcons and ravens are plentiful, and so are otters, and there are many badgers. Tradition relates that in far-off days, when deer were plentiful, they were driven over ground on which pits had been dug; these were covered over with branches and turf, and strong sharply-pointed stakes were firmly set in them, to impale any beast which fell through. The late head-stalker, who now looks after matters in the second largest forest in Scotland, showed me several stakes which he had found in a moss far up on the hill: they were long, heavy, pointed instruments, well preserved by

the peat, and he was convinced that they had been set where he found them by ancient hunters. In due time they attracted the attention of maids searching for something for their fires, and I fear they went the way of Carlyle's first MS. of the 'French Revolution' and some of Sir Isaac Newton's calculations.

In none of the forests of Scotland is it possible, if you are high up, to get altogether out of the

*The Shot.*

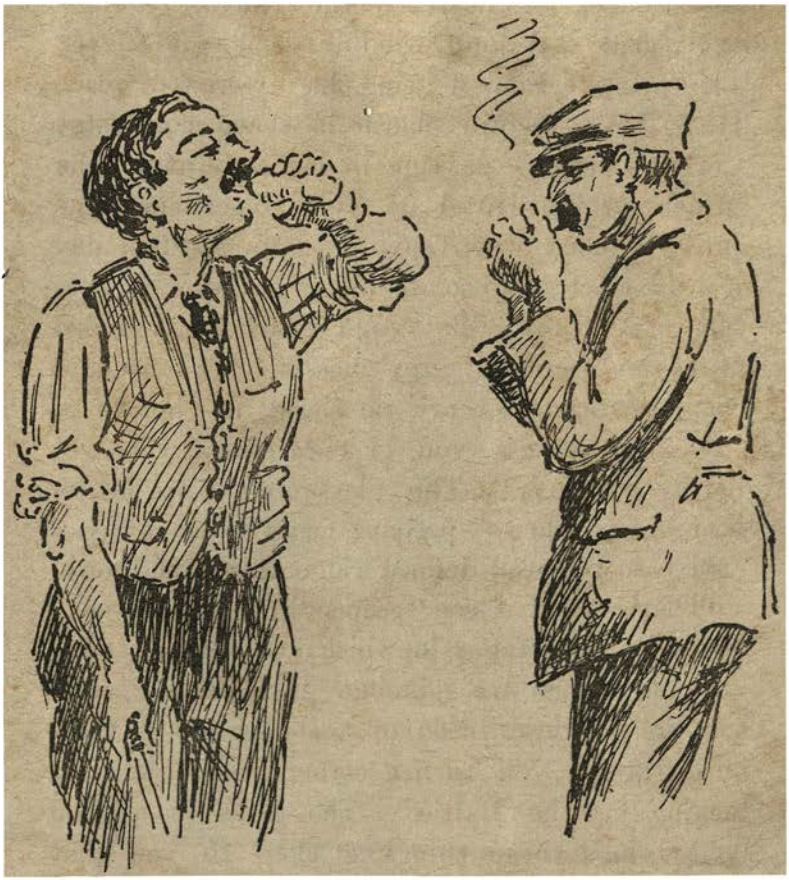
sight of civilisation—cultivated land. From the midmost point of Ross-shire a good glass will show clearly the red sails of fishing-smacks creeping north to Skye, while, turning round, you may see a fleet of great battleships making for the Cromarty Firth under a dense pall of smoke. So it is in the Alps: the Black Forest seems close to on the one side, the plains of Italy on the other; it looks as if an old-time giant could have jumped from the Schreckhorn

*An Irish Garden—Glenveagh Castle, Donegal.*

or the Matterhorn into a crocus-spangled meadow. But, if high ridges and peaks are avoided, you may wander for days in the North, through lonely flats and long winding glens, and never come across a human being, hardly cross a road. There is a certain charm in sharp contrasts: Carlyle's famous passage in his account of the attack on the Hôtel de Ville sometimes came into my mind when spying on an autumn day a wild tract of desolate hills. Nothing is here but great brown flats and sharp or rounded peaks and endless grey masses of stone and black tarns; there are no sheep, no houses of any kind; unless you look carefully you will hardly see deer. The glass creeps up in its search, and then — perhaps many miles away— you pass the well-defined ridge of purple-brown, and far beyond it see "reapers in peaceful woody fields," and cottages in which you may be quite sure old women are spinning. Like Louis Stevenson, in his description of a commonplace Edinburgh street, you turn a corner "and see ships tacking for the Baltic." The glass in a good light brings these things so close to you that you have to look with plain eyes for a moment to realise how far away the sunny patches of cornfield and little clumps of trees are.

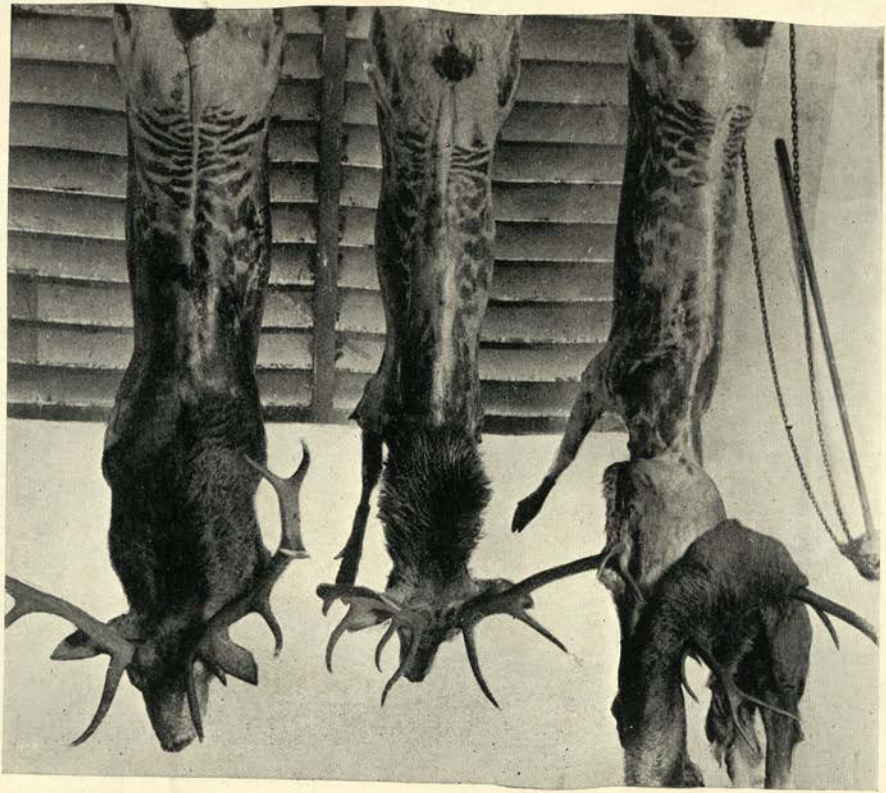
This forest is fenced; and it is one of my objects to show both the advantages and the

drawbacks which are attached to ground protected in such a way. In the first place,



*Before the gralloch.*

without fencing there could here be no forest: it would obviously be impossible in these days to create a great dwelling-place for deer,



*Three fine Stags*—24 *st.* 12 *lb.*; 18 *st.*; 19 *st.*

establish a "haunt" for them, as a fowler would say, if the first comers were liable to be shot at on the winter journeys they would be sure to pay to the cropped land down below. There are not many districts where even a fenced forest could be formed on a large scale — a forest as distinct from a park. The ground must be suitable both in its feeding properties and its altitude; then it must be a compact lump; there must be no roads through it, and there should be a considerable acreage of wood. Within the boundaries of the Irish forest I had the privilege of renting for two years, all these advantages are to be found. I have been stalking regularly for over thirty years, and I venture now, as impartially as possible, to sum up my experiences. A host of men could speak with greater weight on one side of the question, but there are not many who have had much practical knowledge of the other — there cannot be, for there is no enclosed forest in the kingdom so large, or a quarter so large, as this Irish one.

To some men — and they perhaps with great knowledge of deer — a fenced forest will convey an idea of "easiness," the certainty on any reasonable day of one or more stalks. That has not been my experience, and I often wished during the autumn of last year that such confident people had been with me and had shared

my lot. It would sometimes have been a consolation to a tired man, stopped in his work at dusk perhaps six or seven rough pathless miles from home, to have had such a companion with him. The latter would have recognised then, if never before, that blank days and disappointments are not confined to open country. During seventeen days of the last season I fired only two cartridges; and they were days of good honest hard work, not easy walks or casual afternoons. Off at nine, I was seldom in before eight, sometimes later; and often I had no stalk at all. I do not mean to say that I could not have killed deer on these long tramps; but I had to keep up an average, and this varies naturally according to the ground. In a small forest I have been well contented when ten or fifteen stags weighed anything over fourteen stone; here our average ran up to 18 st. 9 lb. and 18 st. 5 lb. for twenty-eight and thirty-five stags, weighed, as is the custom in most parts of Scotland, with heart and liver only. (I have never been able to understand why these two portions should be left out. A stag's heart is surely as good as a bullock's, and no part of him is more delicate than the liver when he is shot in good time.)

*The* advantage of unenclosed ground is quite obvious. You never know when you go out

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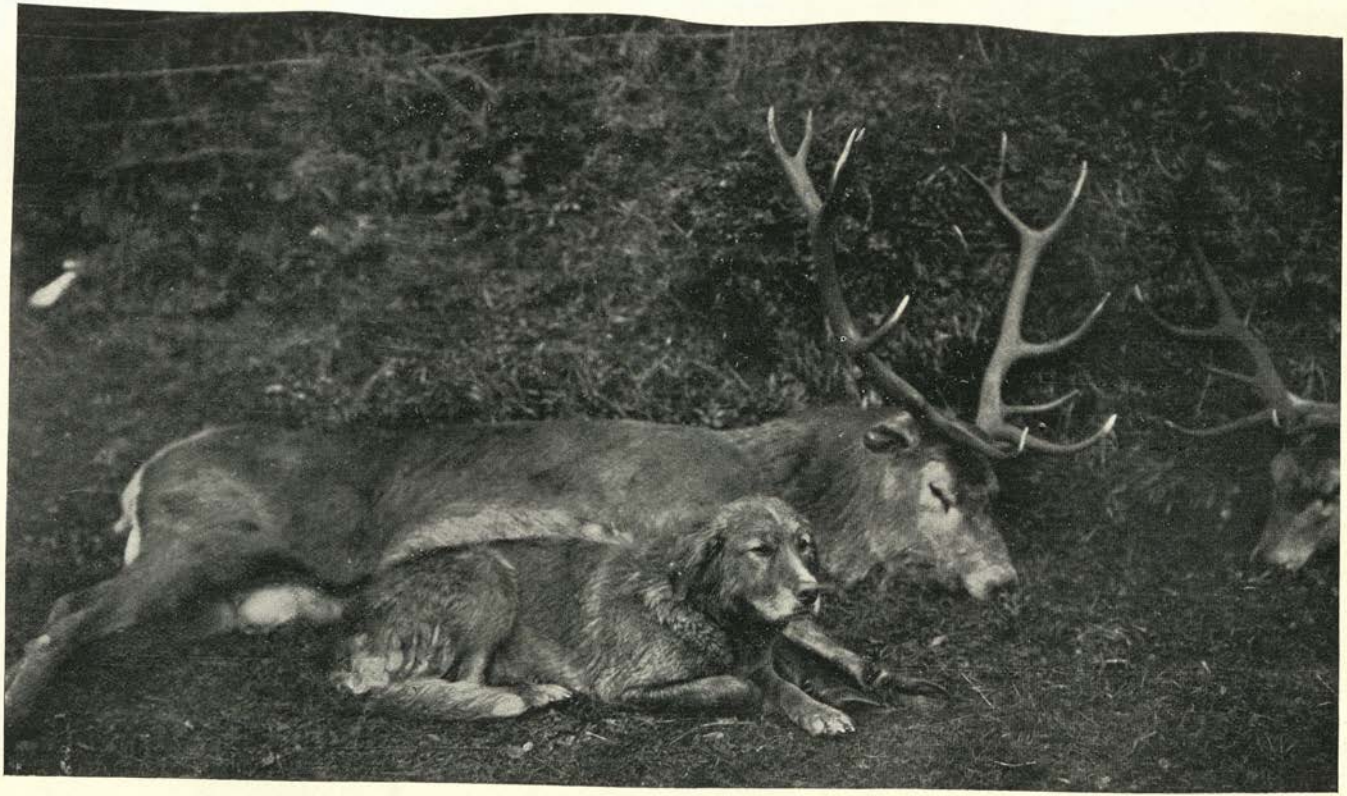
*Off home after the Goose-hunt.*

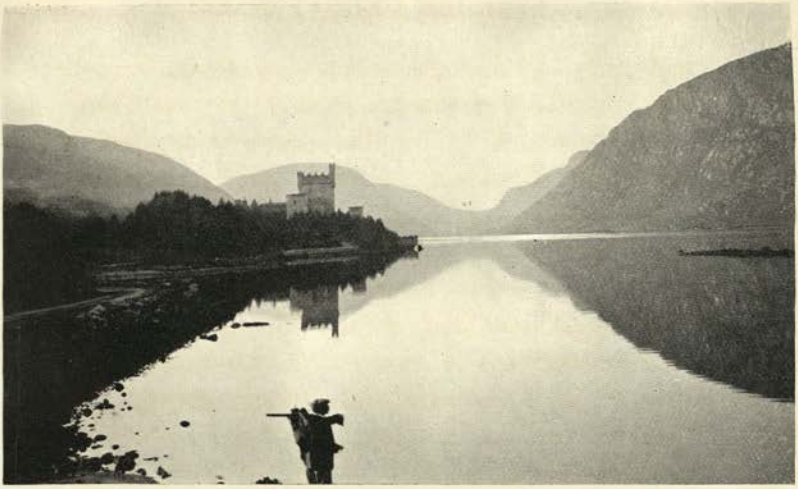


*Mhairi the Tracker and the 25-st. Stag.*

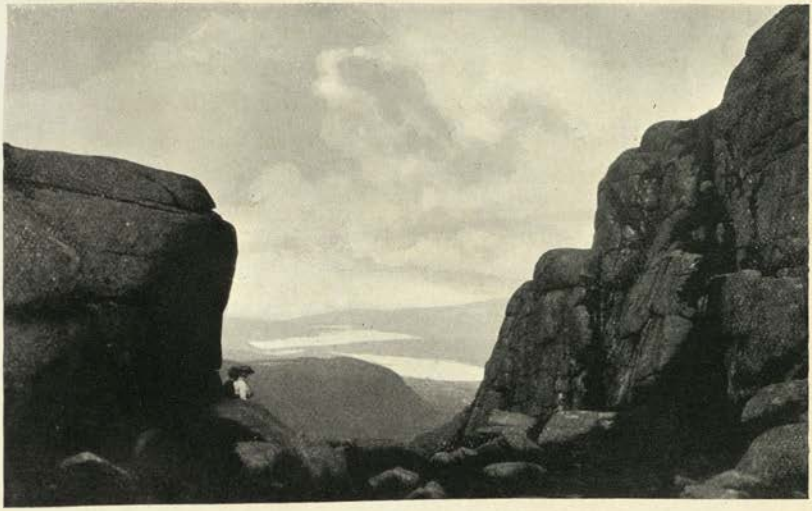
what you may see—what the wind of the night or of the past week may have brought you. This is the chief benefit enjoyed by Scotch stalkers, and it is a great one; but I hope to show that surprises and uncertainties are not confined to that open country. I do not think that stalking in a fenced forest would be a good school for a beginner — whether gentle or simple: he might grow up less patient, less observant, and be apt to try experiments which he would hardly attempt in Scotland unless his marches were exceedingly wide. Not that the stalking is easier: I am sure that here, at any rate, it is more difficult. We may brush aside at once and altogether the idea that a fence is a help; even if it was arranged in some such way as the netting in a decoy, I doubt if it would long further the object of its unprincipled maker. Deer soon learn their ground, and it would be very difficult to push them into a *cul-de-sac*. In my experience, the ten-wire obstacle has never been of the smallest help, either in getting a shot or in following a wounded stag; and in this particular forest you might be out day after day and never know you had such a surrounding. The excellence of the grazing also added to the difficulties of getting at deer: they picked up their food quickly, and had more time to spend lying down chewing the cud and watch-

ing; they did not go so much together, in such large herds, but spread themselves over wide spaces of the hill, and they were more difficult to deceive when they had once become suspicious. Some of the good stags kept out of our way in an extraordinary manner. There were one or two rifles out on most of the days between August 22 and October 8. The ground covers some thirty-four or thirty-five square miles, and some of it is very wild and difficult to spy; but even so, one would think that few deer of outstanding merits would, during this long period, be altogether overlooked. This was not, however, the case; a good royal which Macdonald, the most capable and accurate of head-stalkers, came across in July was never seen again, and in the last week of the season we daily saw deer which had hitherto kept out of our sight. Just before we finished I had a strange experience which showed how cunning some of them were and how very capable of looking after themselves.

On October 6 a friend, having an idle day, spent it lying on the hill, carefully spying. He reported at night that he had seen a big stag with a very fine head—better than any we had yet come across—and I went out the next day to look for this stranger. The light, especially towards the west, was very bad: a curious purple bloom clung to the



*Glenveagh Castle, Co. Donegal.*



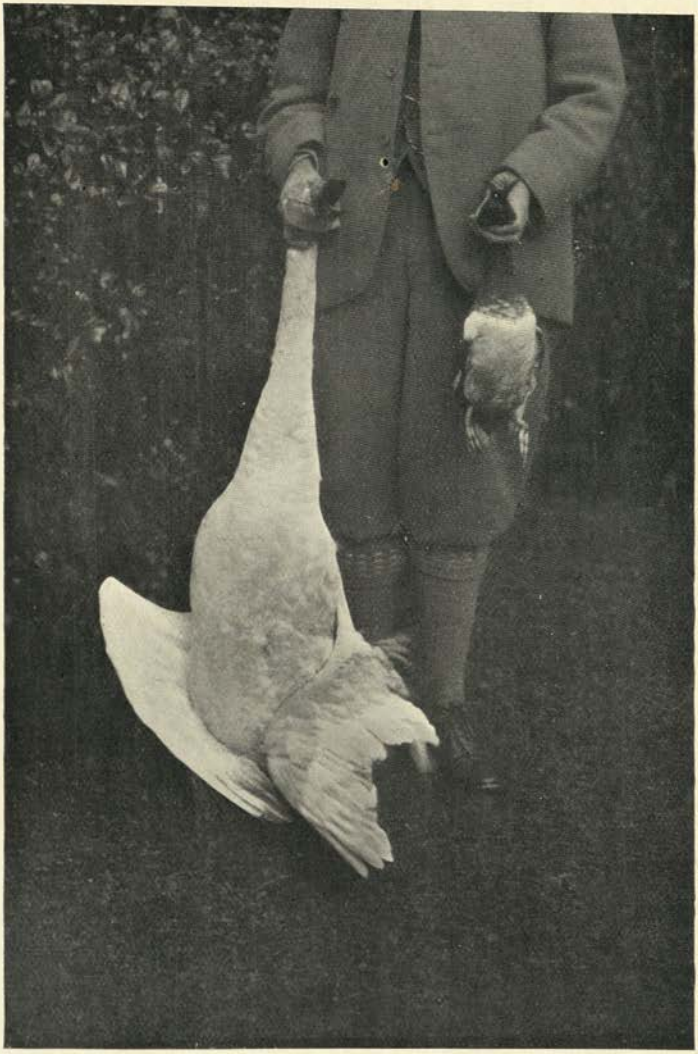
*Glenveagh Forest, top of Poisoned Glen.*

hills; and a thousand deer might have been packed in a corrie within a couple of miles, and not one of them would have been visible. We could make out nothing of the big deer, and, coming across two decent ordinary stags, debated whether it would not be wise to make an attempt on one of them; if we had, I should have lost one of the prizes of my sporting life. Then, just at the crisis of the judgment, the sharp eye of the lady of our party was caught by something on a skyline; and when careful examination of it had been made, we cheerfully abandoned all idea of the first-seen beasts.

Here was our quarry; by one o'clock we made the first attempt on him. The stalk *looked* as if it would be a simple one; but when I was probably within a few minutes of getting the shot a young stag jumped out of a hole and bolted full in his sight, and he and his hinds made a long passage to the south and disappeared, and we were as far off success as ever. It was some time before we were able to pick up the stag again, now as far below us as he had been before above. He was by himself in a little hollow; he stood there like a craven statue watching: for twenty minutes not a limb moved—only now and then a horn. Here again the little hill parliament engaged in eager debate: should we try him where he was, or would it be better to "move" him and trust to

being able to manœuvre safely up above? Moving deer, unless there is a well-known pass, is risky work, and yet to get at him where he was would be a difficult business; there was another stag lying down within a few hundred yards of him, and the stalk at the one might be impossible without disturbing the other. Much we debated: but the day was getting on, and finally we made a quick descent over the rough hillside — a long detour to be sure of the wind—and then the lady and the gillies got into a sheltered corner and Alistair Macdonell, the second stalker, and I went on. We got near the hollow, but success was as far from us as ever. Knoll after knoll from which to shoot was gained in vain; I could make out nothing of the stag. With utmost caution we crawled to several other possible positions, not so much afraid of him as of the drowsy cud-chewing outlier we had seen from above; and at last we crawled into the latter's view and he was up and off, and our beast with him—off in good earnest this time, it seemed, and for far.

It was nearly five o'clock—the hour when perhaps most shots in a forest are made—when a dejected and unhappy little company united and followed on towards the west. The details of the third attempt would take too long to relate. With great luck we picked up the second stag, managed with some difficulty to avoid him and get past



*Whooper Swan and Tufted Duck.*

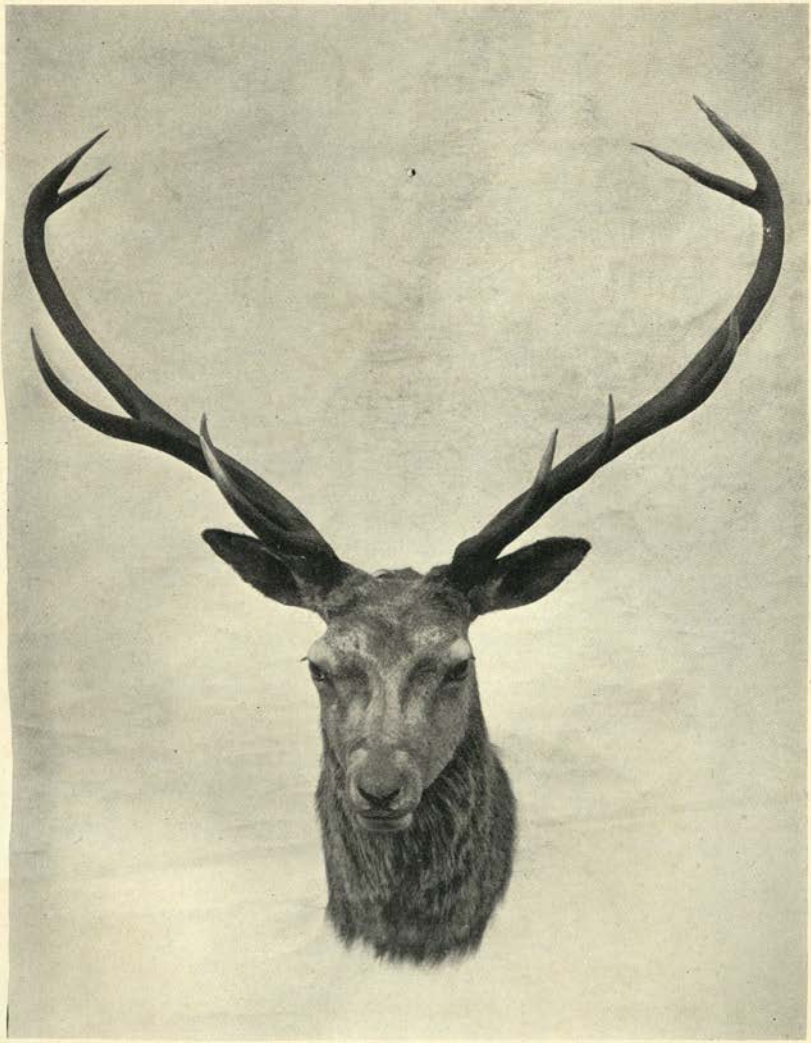
him, quickly climbed a steep ridge, and then suddenly I found myself lying with cocked rifle in a fairly comfortable position within a hundred and twenty yards of the great deer. He was very uneasy — looking back often, slowly walking on. I shall always be grateful to Fortune, who has played me many a queer trick, that she gave me then a helping hand. This stag weighed 24 st. 12 lb., and had a very fine thirteen-point head with a strong rough horn: few better, I think, went to Macleay's at Inverness that year. Till a few hours before his death no one knew that there was such a deer on the ground. It is certain, I think, that he had spent the whole of his days in the woods or copses on the hillside, only coming out at night to feed; otherwise it would have been impossible to have overlooked him.

This was the heaviest stag I have killed or am ever likely to kill; but in 1907 I shot one with a more taking if not quite so strong a head. We called him the "thirteen-pointer," and I only saw him twice for brief intervals before I got him on September 23. He had five beautiful tops to one horn and four on the other, and weighed 20 st. 4 lb. We had a long following stalk after this deer—generally a delicate operation. There were about twenty stags with him, and they were wandering on against a high cold wind to get into better shelter. I shall always remember the pleasure

with which MacLennan and I dug another and yet another point out of the peat in which he had fallen. "A royal! There's thirteen points!—fourteen! *fifteen!*"

Then, adding to this list of good stags seldom seen, one of our guests in 1907 got a very fine ten-pointer with a span between the horns of exactly thirty-six inches, of whose existence, till the morning he was shot, no one had the least idea. And I had a somewhat strange experience in that same year 1907: I hit a very good stag rather too low down in the shoulder, and lost him. Some days were spent in the search, but we never saw him again, and felt sure that he would die of the wound. This deer was not seen in 1908, and was shot at the end of September in the following year; the injured leg was perfectly stiff, but he was in fine condition and weighed eighteen stone.

To sum up this question of fences: if I had to begin my stalking again I would begin on open ground, and then, after a good many years' experience, I should like to work in an enclosed forest, or perhaps preferably on an island. You may miss some excitements; the sudden appearance of a good stag which a week ago was feeding in a corrie fifty miles away is one. But you are quite free from anxiety and little jealousies: you can nurse the ground, kill off poor deer and spare good ones, and feel that in time you will be amply



*A* 10-*Pointer*, 36-*inch span.*

*A* 10-*Pointer*, 36-*inch span.*

rewarded for your forbearance; and I hope I have shown that if your marches are wide enough you may be quite ignorant of the prizes they contain.

It was no light undertaking to make this forest: few men, very few women, would have cared to give the thought and time and money that it required. None but one who has undertaken it can have an idea of the work necessary: the building-up of the fence through this wild country, the endless expenditure of money; and then there was the risk and uncertainty of the great experiment, the small progress at first, the long waiting, and the slow increase of the stock. No one in these islands has ever attempted anything of the kind on so large a scale; but the lady who owns these mountains was far-seeing and very patient, and capable of dealing with things in a large way; and I think she must feel now that she has been amply rewarded. Her ground was not suitable for cattle or sheep; there were very few grouse on it; save for a few blue hares it might have been called quite untenanted. Now it is a place of intense interest to a naturalist as well as a sportsman, and it gives work for far more people than it could do in any other state.

Getting these big stags home was a serious business. There is only a small mileage of paths, though now and then one or other of the loughs on which there were boats gave some help. They

had to be dragged great distances, and three and often four men were required to do it. I often wondered what was passing through the minds of the gillies who attended me when, late at night, wet through, and far from home, I left them to get near the deer. I know quite well that in their places I should most fervently have prayed for the stag's life, for a treacherous puff of wind to help him, or an unsteady hand. If the stalk was successful I used to leave the remainder of my lunch with them and tell them with grim untruthfulness how sorry I was. But I never once heard a grumble or a murmur: "Faith, I wish he was twice as big," was a common retort. In spite of all difficulties, the work was so well organised that only four stags during the last season had to be left out all night. One of them—a pretty fourteen-pointer—I shot in such an inaccessible district that it took four men and a horse twelve hours to get him in. However late the men got home, it was arranged that they should have some hot supper. They were always willing and cheerful; most of them had good eyes—in one or two the sight was almost phenomenal.

A great deal of crawling had to be done on this ground. At the beginning of the season I was handicapped by an accident which had somewhat crippled a knee and my left hand, and I could not spread the latter out flat, but had to "bunch"

*A* 13*-Pointer—weight* 24 *st.* 12 *lb.*

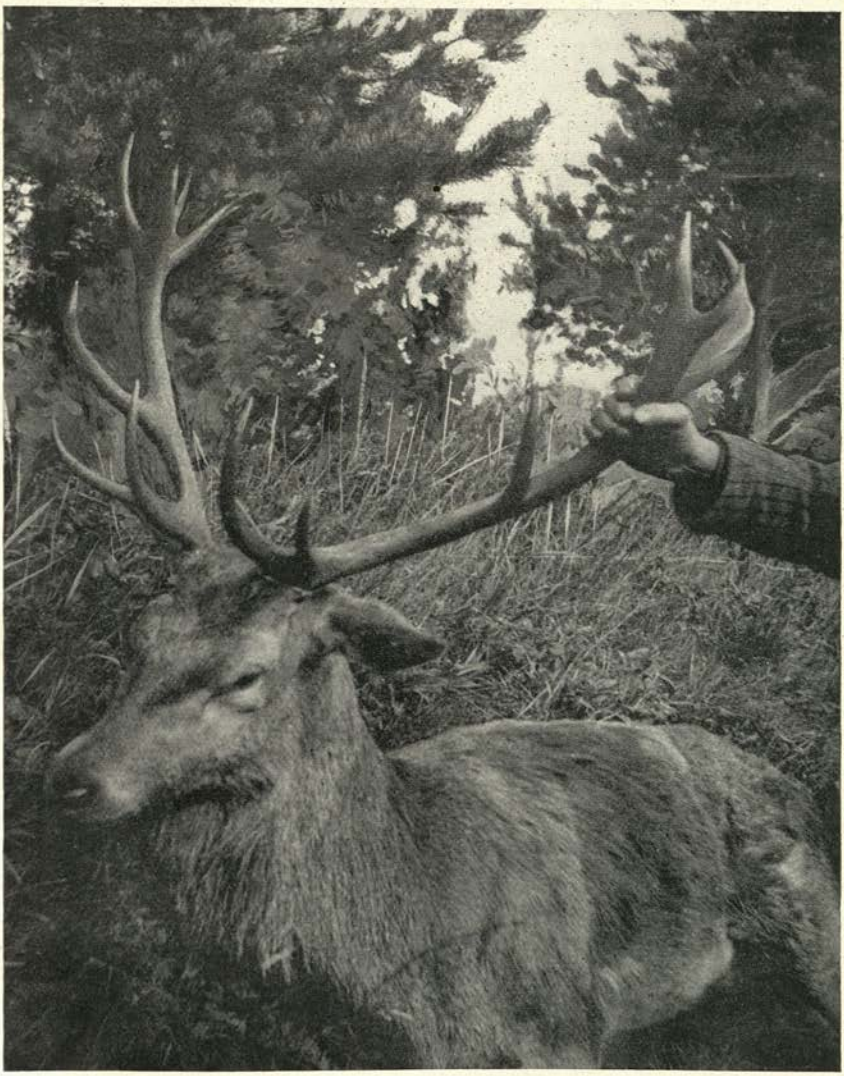
*The 13-Pointer—back view of Skull.*

it. And so, on our second day out, it was agreed between Macdonald and myself that this mode of progression was to be avoided as much as possible. It perhaps naturally followed that before night I had gone through the longest and hardest spell of it I have ever experienced. We found half a dozen stags and a few hinds on the slope of a bare hillside. The morning was fine, but about mid-day it came on to rain heavily, and the north wind gradually increased in strength till it was blowing a furious gale; I have never been out on a hillside except in winter in such weather. We got within six hundred yards of the deer at twelve o'clock, and at four we were still far out of shot of any of them; but though we made so little progress in a direct line, we were continually moving, trying this or that possible approach, only to find it led to nothing. Much of the ground was flat bare rock. The deer were in shelter, but we were exposed to the full blast of the gale and icy rain, and all through those four hours we could only move with the greatest care and deliberation. I have often thought when struggling against adverse circumstances in a forest that stalking was an overrated amusement, but never did I feel this with such solemn conviction as when I crept—a drenched and numbed man—on those forbidding rocks. No doubt the storm helped us; on that bare face in any ordinary

weather we must have been sooner or later picked up. Macdonald showed extraordinary patience and determination, and at last we were rewarded. Some lying-down hinds which had all the time commanded our approach shifted a few yards, and we were able to get on and wriggle to a knoll within shot of the deer. They caught me directly I raised myself up to shoot. I saw a blurred mass of brown alert things staring at me through the lashing rain; I tried to hold steady for a moment a shaking body, to feel with numb swollen finger the trigger, and I missed. The next moment we were the only inhabitants of the desolate hillside.

With few words we stood up—for the first time for so many hours—and set off for home. Macdonald did not seem to take the shortest road, and he went very quickly. We struggled and stumbled on for a mile or two, and then the watching Fates for the first time that day were kind to us. The deer made for a far distant shelter; but they seem not to have cared to face the full force of the gale, and came back á little and took the leeward side of a great ridge instead of going straight over it: here we ran into them, and I got a near but hurried shot at my stag and killed him—a fine ten-pointer weighing just two pounds short of eighteen stone. To Macdonald was due the credit—first for his inexhaustible

*Donald Macdonald.* *Alistair Macdonell.*



15-*Pointer—weight* 20 *st.* 4 *lb.*

patience, then for his knowledge of the line the deer would take.

So my troubles were forgotten—the wet and the cold and the failure — and I fought contentedly the long road home. It was well I knew it, for the mist sometimes completely shut me in; the rain never ceased for a moment, the wind howled and roared and crashed through the rocks as if it had been mid-winter instead of August. Half a dozen times I was completely blown over; but my cares were at an end. Not so those of the men: I sent help to them as soon as I could, but they had a terrible time of it before—late at night—they got the stag home.

Once during this season we had a grimmer search than after a wounded stag. One January day a man left a village some ten or twelve miles away to collect "crottle" — the lichen which grows on rocks and is used for dyeing wool. He never came home again, and a search was organised and kept up for some weeks. It was thought he might have strayed into an outlying part of the forest; and it was a strange sight to see forty or fifty men systematically beating up and down over the quiet hills: one day there were a hundred out. There are few dangerous bogs or springs in this part of the ground; and even if lost in some treacherous hole the tin and small sack he carried would have shown where he was.

More probably—ill or caught by the bitter night—he had crept for shelter in a little cave or cleft among the rocks; and the ground is so wild and difficult to examine that except by chance his bones may never be found.

We spent the autumn and winter of 1909-10 snipe-shooting in Clare, in that district of "Corca Bascinn" which is associated with two noble poems by Miss Lawless. I seldom think of the desolate sea which unceasingly frets or thunders on that wild coast without picturing somewhere on it the oarless and sailless boat bringing over to their old home the dead men of the Irish Brigade who had fallen a few hours before at Fontenoy; the cry of the frightened fisherman when he met that dreadful company in the mist of the early morning: "Why are ye so white?" In the North of Ireland our home was near the country which Moira O'Neill writes of. We gave her names to our places: whatever might be set down on the Ordnance map, the lonely Osmunda-haunted streamlet was for us the "Brabla Burn," and Loughareema was the black tarn where we waited for wild geese and heard that rustling among the reeds which the little wave makes when "it runs up the shore and flees as if on feet." We shall always be grateful for the pleasure these verses have given us.

From the people—the country people—in this

*James Brady, John Maclennan (late Head Stalker), John Orr, Alistair Macdonell (Second Stalker).*

*An Off-day. Stalkers and Beaters in the Warren.*

wild district we received nothing but kindness: some of them were naturally more interested in our sport than others, but all were invariably civil and obliging. Whatever they could do to help us they did, and always pleasantly; and some of our few neighbours—the owners of the far-stretching estates around—were very courteous. I had the privilege of shooting over many thousand acres of their land marching with my own, though I was seldom able to avail myself of it. But one thing the sportsman going to Donegal—at any rate *our* part of Donegal—must remember: there is absolutely *no* "open" country to shoot over here as there is in Clare or Kerry.

# MEDITATIONS IN A DEER-FOREST.

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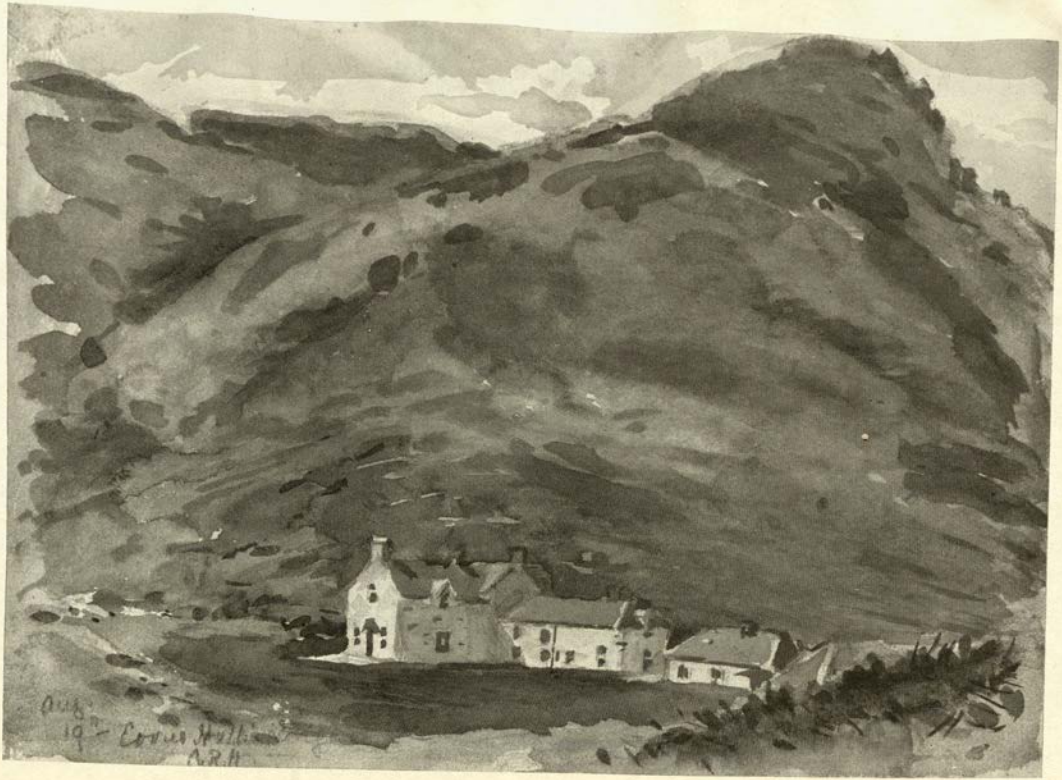
Long ago a race of men of whom we know little built with infinite labour a series of walls in some of the wildest and most remote of the forests of the north of Scotland. Across the watersheds of the "beallachs" or passes which lead from one solitary glen to another these walls run, and they were continued far up the steep bare ridges on either side till a natural fortification of more or less inaccessible rock rendered them unnecessary. Material was plentiful enough in such places, and the builders had only to give their labour. Here and there the work they had set themselves to do was not completed, and only a fragment of wall stands on the wide barren "bridge" leading between two great hills. To the casual passer-by one of these fragments appears as if it had been erected for some other purpose than keeping cattle from wandering,—rather perhaps to give shelter to men lying in wait for deer. If



*Corriehallie Lodge, Ross-shire.*

From a sketch by Miss C. R. Hartley.

the deer of those days were like in their habits to the descendants which occupy these hills now, this would in certain winds be a most desirable hiding-place. In very old days they were hunted here: authentic history, centuries old, relates how they were coursed with dogs, and high up above, on a narrow green ridge, is a little depression still called in Gaelic "the Bowman's pass." But a very casual inspection of the ground near this particular bit of wall shows that the original intention had been to extend it both east and west, and suitable stones had been laid out on the line it was meant to take. On some long ago afternoon the strong men threw down their heavy burdens, seeing in their mind's eye the finished work as they turned downwards and homewards. They never finished it,—as the stones fell that day so they lie now, undisturbed; in some places you can see the pit marks in the ground from which the larger ones were hoisted out. For some six weeks in the year there is a chance that men with rifles may pass this way,—in certain winds the ridge will only be examined by glasses from a distant hill-side,—and for the remaining months the place is nearly as lonely and unvisited as if it lay in Nova Zembla or Alaska.

Is such a place likely to become, not inhabited, but occupied? Will Deer and Crofter Commissions and Congested District Boards ever bring

it about that people will come and live near it? On the jagged ridge which leads by its "Eleven Steps" up to the mountain to the eastward the sea-pink or thrift grows in luxurious abundance; from its green rosettes stand up thousands and tens of thousands of pale rose-coloured flowers; when the wall below was being built, perhaps some child came up with its father, and, greatly daring, climbed a little way up the ridge and gathered some of the pinks. If not—and the journey up from the strath would be a long one—the plants must have stood untouched and probably quite unregarded through the centuries, the blossom of one generation after another turning their bright faces up to the July sun only to fade on their stems. Will children ever play among these grey shattered rocks and gather flowers there?

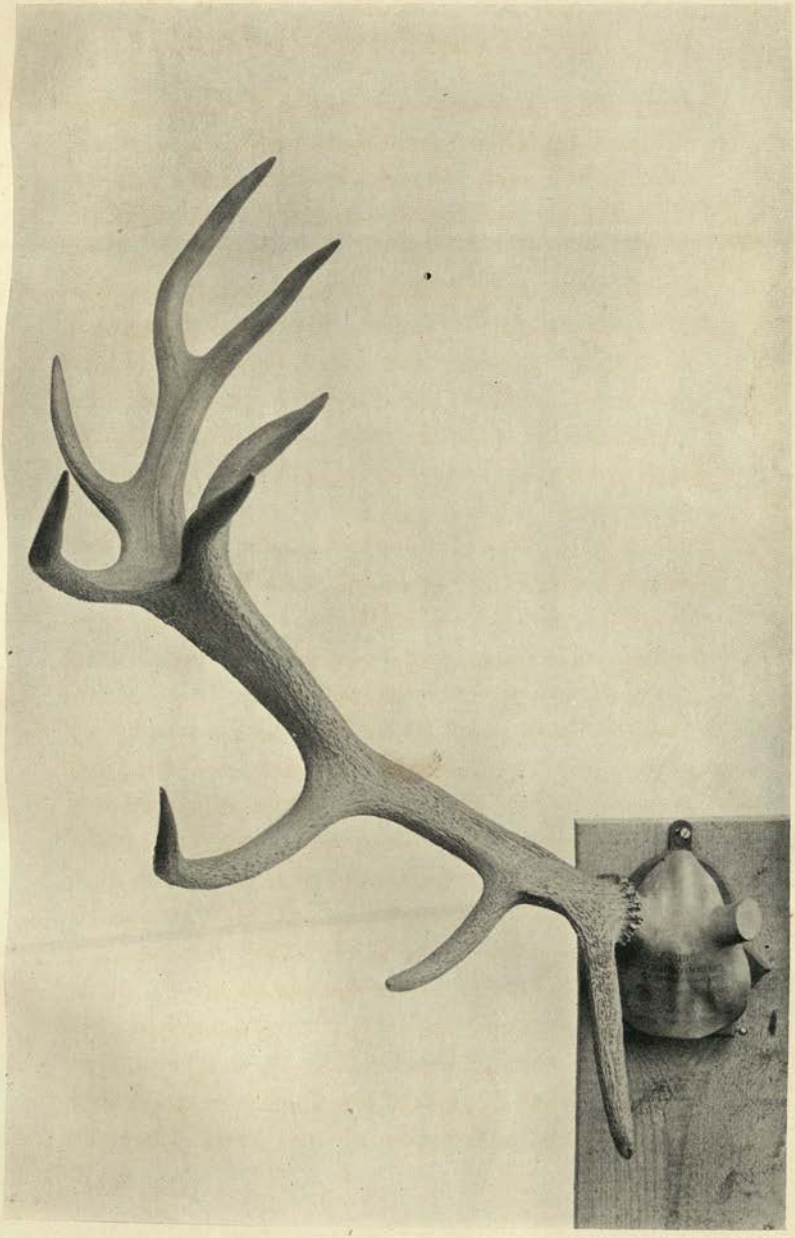
Some would quickly answer the question in the affirmative, but it would be a weary climb for them, even if they lived in comfortable houses in the valley below: everything is on a large scale here, and distances much greater than they seem. There may be—there very often are—a couple of hundred deer feeding in the great green corrie which lies to the south, but one unaccustomed to using a stalking-glass might search its steep slopes for long and hardly see a hind. A few miles to the eastward is the Sanctuary where for

a great part of the year live three hundred, four hundred, even five hundred stags; but the same uneducated person would see nothing with the naked eye, and even with artificial help only slowly make out a tithe of its inhabitants.

It is certain that the wall-builders did not live in the strath below in the winter, and spring was probably far advanced before they took possession of it. Grass here grows rich and rank, but is late in coming: the hillsides around are grey and bare long after lowland pasture gives abundant food. The rainfall is very heavy, the snow comes early and lies long and very deep. These people had no sheep; it was to turn small underbred "black cattle" that they fenced their boundaries. Only the hardiest blackfaced sheep could live in this district in winter, and the young stock would have to be driven down to the low country before it was well in sight: hand-feeding could only be carried on at enormous cost, and they often could not exist without it. The well-intentioned utilitarian enthusiast would have many things to think about before he planted a colony in such a place; many things to think about after he had done it. He would have to make a road to give access to the farms—not a simple matter, carried as it would have to be over spongy mosses and many turbulent burns. He would have to build houses for the newcomers; he would have to erect

many miles of fencing, unless the wasteful system of "herding" was to be continued. He would have to find money for some of the little farmers to buy stock and implements, and often for rent, if indeed such a thing as rent entered into his calculations. He would have to provide a system of education, for at present the nearest school is more than twenty miles away, the nearest church the same distance. He would have to take into consideration that in most seasons corn would not ripen here, or if it ripened, could not be gathered in.

To many people there is—especially at certain times—something exceedingly attractive in the contemplation of ancient days and matters connected with them. To some such the broken walls of a great abbey standing on its rich meadow land, surrounded by immemorial trees, are hardly more impressive than the tumbled-down heaps of stones suddenly come across on a far-stretching moor. Here people lived for many generations: this was the home to which they came back tired at night, which they left eager or down-hearted for their work in the morning, which they left one morning perhaps for Canada or Australia, to come back no more for ever. Here came the bride, and between the rough uprights which mark where the door stood dead men and women have been carried out. Now the



*Prehistoric (?) Horn of Red Deer found buried in sand on an Island off the West Coast of Donegal.*

grouse sit and crow undisturbed on the knolls round, and deer feed on the sweet grass which grows in what used to be the living-room of the house. Hope and despair, love and faith and doubt, tragedy and comedy, had their abodes in this narrow dwelling; it was a humble centre of busy active life, a little lighthouse standing up on the brown moor; such a home as Stevenson had in his mind when he wrote these beautiful and most pathetic lines—

"Spring shall come, come again, calling up the moorfowl,
Spring shall bring the sun and rain, bring the bees and flowers;
Red shall the heather bloom over hill and valley,
Soft flow the stream through the even-flowing hours;
Fair the day shine as it shone on my childhood—
Fair shine the day on the house with open door;
Birds come and cry there and twitter in the chimney—
But I go for ever, and come again no more."

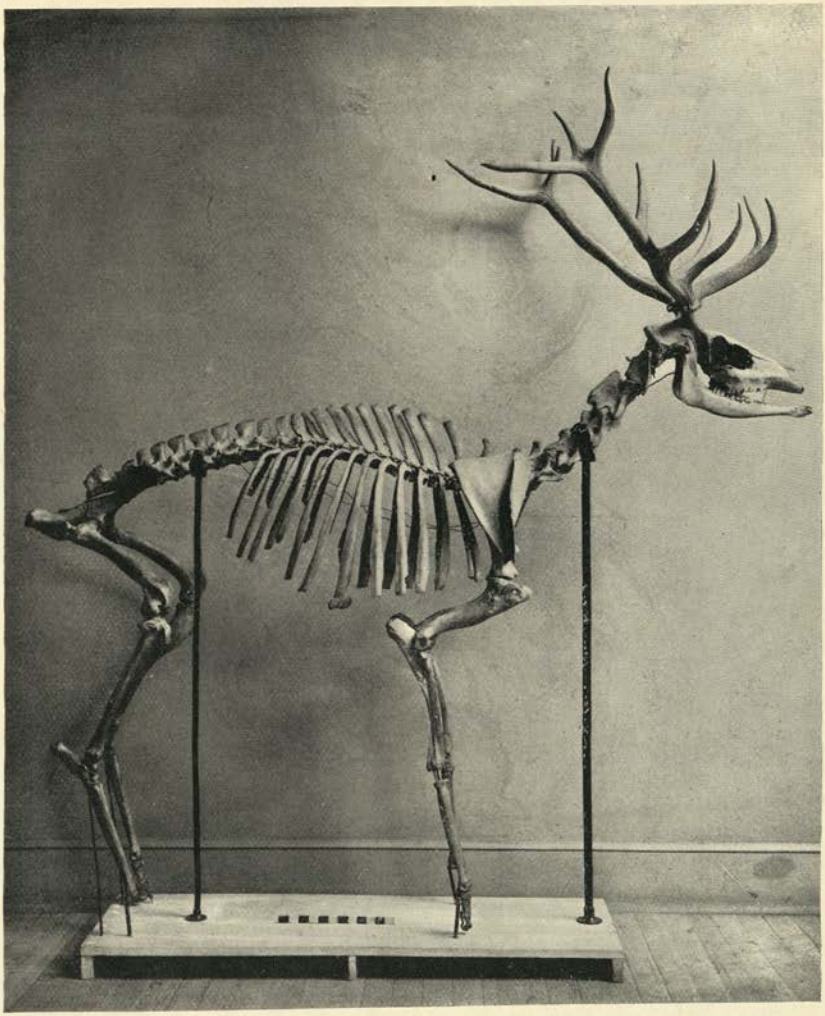
Life here must not be compared or confused with life in higher places, or in places which, if not of great altitude, are bleak and exposed and inhospitable from their position among the hills and the character of the soil and surroundings.

Here, then, you might sit a long summer day, many long days, and never see a human being. Away among the hills above a man might die and his body be never found: the foxes and ravens and crows would be the attenders at his

obsequies, the winds play the funeral march; nature would see to it that all things were done quickly, and in order and decency. Scarcely a year passes that some poor wanderer does not find this life too hard for him, and gives it up among the hills—a pedlar with his little stock of laces, an out-of-work mechanic driven by some extraordinary reasoning to these inhospitable wastes; more often it is a tramp who has once met with kindness at a stalker's or shepherd's house, and again tries too late to find the same road.[1] So these humble folk "enter the famous nations of the dead and sleep with princes and counsellors"; know "what songs the Sirens sang, and what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself amongst women."

In a grim essay, not suitable for reading to a Sunday-school audience, Christopher North gives his account of the Red Tarn Raven Club. Few poems are better known to youthful English-speaking people than the one which relates how a faithful dog guarded his master's remains. The Professor of Moral Philosophy did not believe

[1] As a rule, the body of a man so dying would be found sooner or later: the stalking-glass would one day tell the tale. It might be years after. Not long ago a stalker all but walked over what was left of the skeleton of a man buried in long heather in the middle of a lonely moss. But one who wandered off an ill-defined track might go far from it, and at last creep into some hole or crack among the rocks where he would be hidden from the most prying eyes. There is a reference to such an accident in "An Irish Deer-Forest."



*Almost perfect Skeleton of Red Deer found about* 1830 *when enlarging a lake at Smeaton-Hepburn, East Lothian. Associated with bones of "Bos primigenius."*

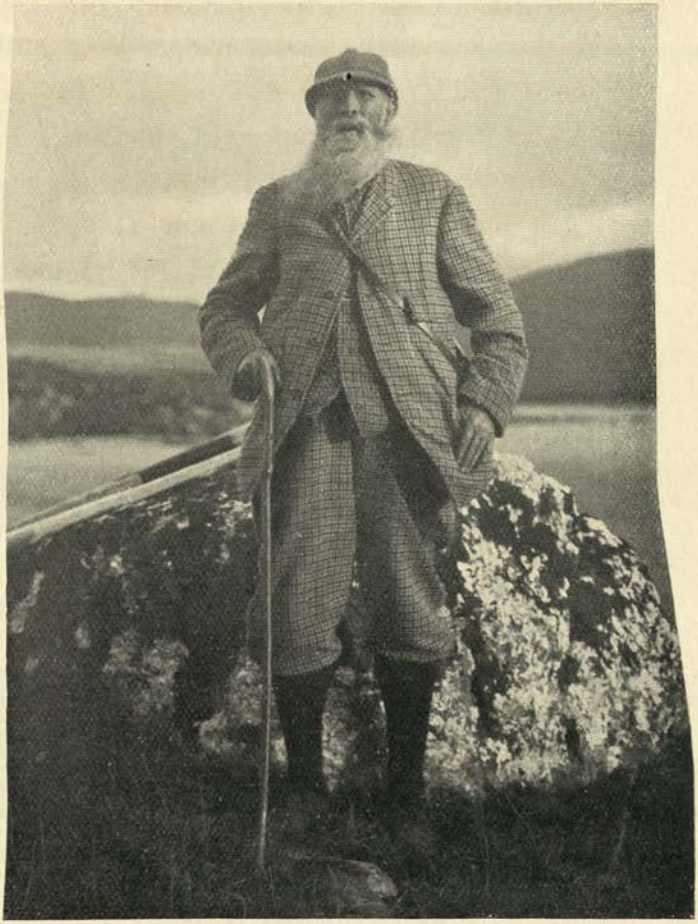
that a dog could exist for many weeks on grass and water; and indeed, if we think it over, which of us does? A capable critic has asserted that the only good line in the often-quoted verses is that which relates how "when the wind waved his garment how oft didst thou start!"

The horns and bones of deer are eaten by the deer. In a land full of peat-bogs and morasses, which has been their home for many centuries, we might expect to find frequent traces of them, but this is far from being the case. In districts which stags frequent at the time of casting their horns these are found in great abundance in a *fresh* state: here the stalker's lass will come in night after night, after her cows, with quite a bundle of them under her arms; and the former, if he picks up a fine or peculiar shaped antler, will often by careful searching be able to find its fellow, but those dropped on the hill soon disappear unless they happen to be very well hidden. The hard untempting morsel is eagerly gnawed and chewed up for the sake of certain salts it contains. During the thirty years I have been stalking and wandering over moors, it has never yet been my fortune to come across a really old horn. I have seen hundreds of miles of drains cut in the preserving peat, deep in meadows, shallow on sheep ground, with the same negative result. It is by finding the skeletons or part of the skeletons of deer in places

where they had been deeply buried, smothered in bogs or shallow lakes or quicksands, or overwhelmed by small landslips, that we are able to compare the horns of ancient stags with those of their most degenerate successors. Now and then the bank of a burn or river is crumbled away by a spate, and something laid bare which has not felt the sun since that long-ago day, many centuries perhaps from us, when a terrible struggle ended in a dreadful death. One such antler was lately found in a northern forest, of a length and thickness such as is never met with now; and diligent search was made for its fellow, but so far with no result. East Lothian is a far cry from any deer country now, but in an old house in that county I have seen a splendid specimen of the skeleton of a stag, perfect to all appearance in every bone, which had been discovered when draining a small lake or tarn.

As the deer, the hinds especially, chew up horns, so do they treat bones: in a very short time the clean-picked bones, even the largest of them, disappear; the skull alone defies them.

The spring of 1906 will long be dismally remembered for its heavy snowfalls and the great mortality among deer: they must have died in the north not in hundreds but in thousands. I know one place where the stalker found the carcasses of forty stags. In a small wood,



*A fine old Stalker, Farquhar Macphail of Monar.*

not far from where I write, the remains of fifty were counted; in another place the death-rate was far heavier, and horses had to be employed to get the bodies exposed near a lodge taken down to the sea. Fresh snow lies a foot or two deep, and deer easily scrape through it and get down to the long heather below; it consolidates and freezes, and still they dig through it. More falls, and they scrape on with bleeding feet, only to get to the hard mass below; then they try another place, and yet another. After the first flush of grass comes they eat too greedily, and the mortality is greater than ever. When spying last autumn, it was often easy to see at a great distance where a deer had died: the dark green patch caught the eye almost as quickly as the whitened bones. So heavy was the death-roll that the undertakers of the forest had not time to attend to their duties. An experienced old stalker told me last year that a beast which died of pure *starvation* did little to help the growth of the grass where it lay.

While fine young deer died in great numbers, an end must almost have been made of all old toothless hinds; and no doubt many a good stag was shot the following autumn who might have lived long enough if the herd he went with had been led, as of old, by one of these gimlet-eyed, long-eared, ragged old females. There is something

uncanny in the sagacity with which such a one points out that the obvious way is not the *right* way; that it is well not to pass within a certain distance of a particular stone on a hillside; that, under given circumstances, wise deer will go *down* wind, and not up.

It is possible in a northern forest to see at the same moment two creatures which do not exist in England, and two others which are extremely rare. It is very long since the blue hare and ptarmigan vanished from the Cumberland hills, and deer in a wild state are only to be found in three counties south of the Tweed, while an eagle is so seldom met with that his appearance is duly announced in the local papers. The golden eagle may be called a comparatively common bird in Ross-shire and Sutherland, though a wail at its approaching extinction is periodically made. Hardly a day passed last autumn, when stalking or shooting, that I did not see one or two: one evening I saw four of the great birds on the wing at the same time, hunting in company, "sailing with supreme dominion through the azure deep of air." A pair bred on our shooting last year; we encouraged an enthusiastic collector to take the eggs, but did not attempt to harm the angry parents. And we came into still closer contact with *Aquila chrysaëtus* when one of the men arrived at the lodge with a fine specimen care-

*East Lodge, Monar Deer Forest. Stalkers, Gillies, and Rifles.*

fully enveloped in his jacket: he had found it in a trap set for foxes. This eagle—a very large one—had been held by blunt teeth on the hardest part of his leg, and was quite uninjured. We photographed him and let him go: he showed no fear, rather disdain and indignation at the outrage he had been subjected to. The injured one in the affair was the stalker, who, after a very uncomfortable six-miles' walk, had looked forward to some treatment being dealt out to his captive which would lead to a visit to a bird-stuffer and a glass case.

It is a common thing to see deer bolt for a short distance and then stand and look about them, alarmed by the sudden appearance of an eagle over a ridge. Several times last year I came across grouse crouching on a bare hillside, afraid to get up till I was right on the top of them, and this in stormy weather when they were wild and difficult to get near: they had seen the shadow of the heavy wings. Most sportsmen are considerate to these birds, though the consideration entails some sacrifice. To say nothing of the harm they do at nesting-time, they will, when hunting, clear a whole hillside. I have occasionally seen a great pack of grouse, a rifle-shot in the air, flying with the wind behind them as only terrified birds can fly, not likely to come to the ground for many miles. And it is a question whether all the members of a

pack so disturbed get back to their own country if the new one is attractive.

It is commonly believed that red-deer are timid and harmless animals, and this is quite true of them in their natural state. I read—I have no practical acquaintance with them—that the lion and tiger and bear will also get out of the way of the passer-by, and that it is only when they are cornered, or very hungry, or have young ones, that they are to be feared. But these creatures can be tamed, and taught to allow foolish people to play all sorts of tricks with them. Exactly the contrary is the case with a stag: if he is petted or tamed he nearly always becomes in time fierce and dangerous. (The same thing may be said of a Highland bull, who, out on a hillside, is the most harmless of all cattle, but develops very nasty and treacherous traits of character when petted and combed and made much of by his keeper.) A stag calf is a pretty and amusing pet, but when he grows up and becomes conscious of the power he carries on his head, it is well to turn him out among his wild brethren, or some day he is certain to give trouble. There are many instances of this.

The annual growth of horns can only be accurately studied when deer are in a park or paddock. In a large park they are in a semi-wild state and comparatively harmless, but in a small

enclosure, where they are brought into close contact with their natural enemies, and are petted and perhaps teased, they soon become very bold. In order to watch this growth of horn, a relative of mine once put two stags and a few hinds into a paddock of some fifteen acres, where they had fair grazing in the summer, and were well fed during the rest of the year. The stags soon became impudent and troublesome. One day a keeper going in to feed them was knocked down, and would probably have been killed if another keeper, hearing his cries, had not come to the rescue. The latter was fiercely attacked by the same stag, but his retriever bravely came to the rescue, and after some time the men managed to get up to, and over, the fence. The second keeper received a very ugly stab in his thigh, which laid him up for some weeks. It was a strange and uncanny sight at certain times of the year to see these animals, by nature so timid and fearful, so cunning and ferocious: I can think of no better adjective than the last to apply to them. No doubt they were teased: I plead guilty myself to now and then having had a shot at them with a snowball or handy turnip. They used to come running out of a thicket when they saw you, and, inside their twelve-wire fence, follow you round the field with swollen necks and tucked-up bodies and the most evil look in their red eyes. A certain and speedy

death would have awaited any one going into their quarters then, unless he had a gun or rifle with him.

A second instance shows the cunning as well as the fierceness of a stag. He had been kept for some time in a large enclosure in a forest, and had been let out. An old friend of mine, whose long and prosperous life had been spent in farming a small holding, and making a great deal of whisky for which the Revenue received no duty, was one day busied about the shore of a loch when he saw this stag coming down from the hill towards him. The beast had not a very good reputation, and the old man made for a peat-stack, which was luckily near at hand, and climbed on to the top of it. In a few seconds the stag was below, bellowing and grunting, and trying to rake the peats down with his horns. There was a heavy "punch" or crowbar leaning against the stack, and with this the besieged in his turn prodded at the deer, now and then getting in a good poke. Finally the latter went off out of sight behind a ridge, and the victor was left in triumph in his fortress. The boat in which he had crossed the loch lay some hundred yards or less away, and, when he had recovered his wind, he cautiously climbed down and made for it as fast as he could. The stag must have been keeping a sharp look-out, and the man had a second run to make for his life. The

deer dashed after him into the water, and *all but* caught him. Never before, I believe, did an ancient and heavily-built illicit-distiller make such a desperate bound for safety as he did that day: small farming and smuggling would have come to a complete end, else, for him then.

If there was something comic in this adventure, especially to one who knew, as I did, both the actors in it, there is nothing but pure tragedy in this third instance I give of a stag's ferocity. An experienced stalker in a forest in Ross-shire started one morning to attend a funeral: he never appeared at it, and never returned home. Then it was remembered that a "tame" stag had been heard making a great noise the previous day, and search was made in the park in which it was kept. Here the body of the stalker was found terribly mangled. He had been making what he thought was a short cut through the dangerous ground, but all the knowledge of his craft did not save this poor man from a terrible death. An ordinary stick would be no defence against the rapid attack of such a stag. A blow on the horns from a heavy bludgeon, if got in at the right moment, might stun him; but firearms of some kind are the only things to rely on. (I once came across the carcass of a stag which had been killed in a fight a few hours before. The victor, not content with what he had done, seems to have vented his fury on his

victim after death by running at and raking the body with his horns, for the skin was riddled with holes, and many ribs were broken.)

The owner of an early forest, who gets most of his stags in September, is much to be envied, for the venison is fatter and better than that which is killed later; but still there is some compensation for the October stalker, who is a daily witness of the fierce jousts and wily manœuvrings of amorous and quarrelsome deer. Even if you have nothing better with you than a stick, it is a fine sight to watch a big herd of two or three hundred or more, when there are many stags in it and one undisputed master of them all. Till he is exhausted by his superhuman labours, what a life he leads himself and every one of his troop! But the big royal or ten-pointer sometimes finds his antlers a vain thing for safety, for a heavy-bodied hummel—a stag without any horns at all—will often get his battering-ram of a head in under them and knock all the wind out of his rival, and then, till he in his turn is exhausted, be the acknowledged leader. Gordon Cumming, in one of his books, says that the roar of a stag reminded him very much of the roar of an African lion. I asked Mr Selous, than whom there can be no better authority, if he had noticed the resemblance, but he did not agree with the older hunter. A walk on an October night through a forest where there are many stags

is a startling experience for a novice: they will be very near you, hardly trouble in the dark to get out of your way, and there is a continuous chorus of snorts and bellows and snuffles. But there is no danger, and you are as safe as if you were passing through a quiet country lane.

It is probable that every man whose occupation brings him into close contact with wild nature must have in him something of a poet, though he may be ignorant of the fact himself—nay, would in most cases indignantly repudiate the suggestion as smacking of effeminacy. For a man may be a poet at heart and yet never have manufactured a rhyme. It is hard to believe that a stalker, for example, gentle or simple, who knew Lady John Scott's "Ettrick," would not most continually be reminded of some of the lines in those melodious verses, "the rustling of heather and fern," "the shimmer of grass on the lea," the "murmuring waters." But, so far as my knowledge goes, there is no instance, except one, of a real poet who has also been a lover of field-sports. There are many references to the chase and to fowling in Shakespeare, but then Shakespeare stands in a class by himself. All knowledge was within his province. We can well imagine him taking part in what he describes so well; but we cannot think of Chaucer as a foxhunter, or picture the author of "Adonais" crawling through a wet bog to get

a shot at a stag. The mind refuses the conception of Wordsworth waiting for high pheasants at a covert shoot. Milton, Dryden, Spenser, Herrick, Byron, Keats, surely cared nothing for field-sports. Scott was a sportsman. "It's commonly him that sees the hare sitting," said his little son, thus explaining his celebrity. But it is rather as a great novelist than as a poet in the first rank that he is accepted by the world. Country-bred Burns's sympathy was with the hunted. Somerville's "Chase" takes a low place as a poem. Christopher North could walk forty miles to fish in Loch Awe, but he is remembered by the 'Noctes Ambrosianæ,' and not by the "Isle of Palms." Charles Kingsley and Whyte Melville, both lovers of sport, wrote charming verses. Tennyson's references to the chase are purely classical. Browning would never have thought of "Donald" if he had possessed the smallest instinct of a hunter of deer.

In the year 1724 Duncan Ban Macintyre—"Donnacha Ban nan Oran, Fair-haired Duncan of the Songs"—was born in Glenorchy, in Argyllshire. He served in the army, and fought at Falkirk; he became a forester to Lord Breadalbane and afterwards to the Duke of Argyll, and he ended his days in Edinburgh, where he was one of the city guard. This man was quite illiterate; he never learned to read, but he composed many poems, which were written down by a

clergyman from his dictation. They were first published in 1768. Of two only of these poems am I able to speak, which have been translated from the original Gaelic by Robert Buchanan.[1] In "Coire Cheathaich"—"The Glen of the Mist"—the old forester gives an account of his home, its wild-flowers and green slopes and swelling hillocks, the cream-white kernelled nuts and rowan berries beside the stream, the soft round nest of the "brindled bee," the wet places where "rushes thicken and long reeds blow." "Fine," he adds, "were the harvest to any reaper who through the marsh and the bog could go." He describes with loving minuteness the wild plants and flowers of the forest, and the creatures who lived there: the "downy canach," the darnel, the "twisted" hemlock, the wind-slanted wild rye-grass (the "shimmer of grass" of "Ettrick"), the juicy moor-grass and close-set groundsel and fragrant clover, the garlic-flower and pennyroyal and dandelion. He draws a pretty picture of the "stainless moss" from which the little daisies and primroses peep, the "dark eyebrow" of cress clinging round the springs. Then he turns to the living things: "Out of the ocean comes the salmon, steering with crooked beak he hies." He describes the stag and the stalk on him, and the chase by his fierce hound; his mate, "the sweet

[1] Published by J. Grant, Edinburgh, 1901.

brown princess of the mountain," the roe creeping under the green branches, the croaking moorhen and "redcock," the little wren "blowing his tiny trumpet," the speckled thrush and robin "lilting together a pleasant song."

"Not a singer but joined the chorus,
Not a bird in the leaves was still;
First the laverock, that famous singer,
Led the music with throat so shrill;
From tall tree-branches the blackbird whistled,
And the grey bird joined with his sweet 'coo coo';
Everywhere was the blithesome chorus,
Till the glen was murmuring thro' and thro'."

In some forests there are no trees, and you might as well expect to hear a nightingale as a pigeon. But the Black Mount is a county in itself, and includes every kind of ground. Then Duncan Ban bursts out into a triumphant cry of affection for his home—

"My beauteous corri! my misty corri!
What light feet trod thee in joy and pride!
What strong hands gathered thy precious treasures!
What great hearts leapt on thy craggy side!"

In "Ben Dorain," the "Last Adieu to the Hills," the old man's song is a lament, not a pæan —a wail of "tempora mutantur," a thinking of what had been.

"Yestreen I stood on Ben Dorain and paced its dark grey path;
Was there a hill I did not know?—a glen or a rocky strath?

*Looking West from Strathmore Lodge, Monar Forest.*

Oh! gladly in the times of old I trod that glorious ground,
And the white dawn melted in the sun, and the red-deer cried around!"

This is his last good-bye—

"Farewell ye forests of the heath! hills where the bright day gleams!
Farewell ye grassy dells! farewell ye springs and leaping streams!
Farewell ye mighty solitudes where once I loved to dwell!
Scene of my springtime and its joys—for ever fare thee well!"

It would be absurd on the strength of two poems, and those only known through translations, to ask for a high place in verse for this untaught forester; but it seems to me that he was able to describe in fitting, and very often beautiful, language the splendid country in which he lived, and the occupation of which he was a master. So long as the Gaelic language lasts his name will be associated with the bold mountain which faces the traveller who passes up from Tyndrum or through Glenorchy to the Black Mount.

# TALES OF A FOREST.

DOWN in the low country the harvest was gathered in; the stacks stood in orderly rows, and the buzz of threshing-mills began to be heard. The stubbles were streaked here and there with brown, where the soil turned up its kindly face with the promise of another year. In orchards apples no longer weighed down the branches, but lay fragrant in dark shelves, awakening dreams of happiness in many boys and girls. The countryside was tidying for the winter, and the sharp pleasant smell of burning rubbish rose up out of many gardens and hedgerows. It was the end of the first week of October, and only a day or two of the stalking season was left.

Up on the "Lùb"[1] there was no wood to mark the coming of autumn; for miles and miles and miles no trees were to be seen. The peat was full

[1] "Lùb" is the Gaelic name for a flat stretch of grass, generally by a river or burn.

of them; at some dim period the whole country had been densely wooded, and birch and Scots fir and hazel lay thick amongst the hags, with the bark on them so fresh that it was difficult to realise the period which had passed since sap ran up behind it in the far-away forgotten springs. Here and there—every five hundred acres maybe

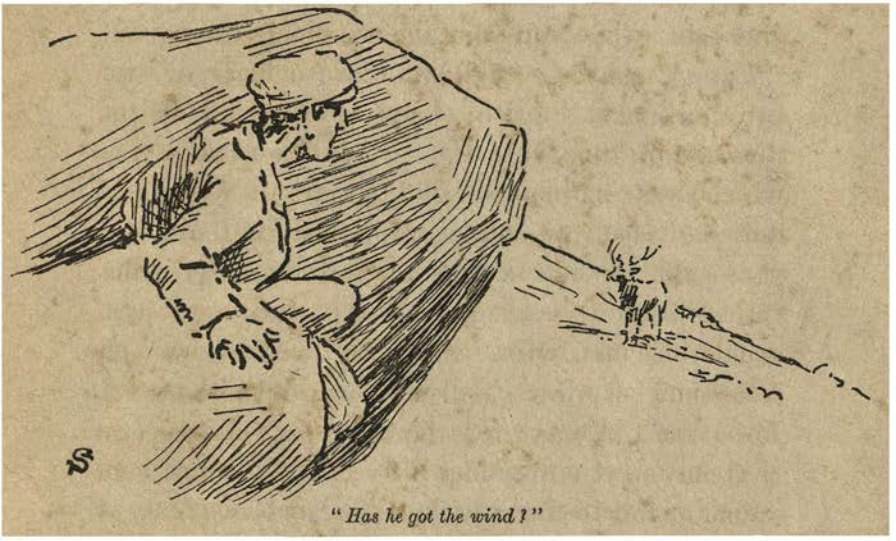
*"He's no ba-ad."*

—the searching stalking-glass was arrested for a moment by the brilliant red or yellow patch, which showed that in some sheltered burn or hole a tiny mountain-ash or birch—a bush rather than a tree—found its solitary livelihood among the rocks. But the mountains had put on their autumn tints; the bright summer greens of grassy

hillsides were changed for all shades of yellow; the heather blossom was long withered, and deep rich browns took the place of the gorgeous early purples. Heavy hoar-frosts at night whitened everything, and hastened on the decay of late flowers. And to any one who knew a forest country, the most significant sign of coming winter was never far away, when the stags in the corries round lifted up their voices and went about their wooing.

On a mellow October afternoon a year or two ago three men were slowly travelling up one of these "lùbs" or flats in a Ross-shire forest. A stalk had been made, and after patient waiting a shot had been got, but it was a long and difficult one—so at least thought the person responsible for it—and the stag had departed scathless, wondering no doubt what the loud noise and sharp puff of wind just over his back had meant. Then the three turned their faces westwards, in the chastened spirit in which at such times men move, and crossing the mile-long flat, came to a "beallach," a little pass between two steep hills. Here the gillie left them—it was a Saturday—and made for the home, some three or four miles away, where his wife, who passed six days of each week in utter solitude, was looking out for him. The others lay down on the dry sun-warmed heather above the beallach for a rest, and a final spy at the ground between them and the lodge.

The stalker, an old though still a very active man, was in a meditative mood; the little disappointment, sharpest at that moment when his keen eyes realised that the jump the stag made was caused by the wind, not by the striking power of the bullet, was past. Many hundreds of times in his long life entirely given up to deer he had



*"Has he got the wind?"*

experienced it, and he never fretted long at the miscalculation over which he had no power, which rendered in a moment all the long patient work of hours fruitless. The other still brooded over the mistake, wishing, as men do at such times, that it might be granted him to have the chance again. To him there seemed then something

melancholy in the sombre landscape around, the infinite stretches of wild country, hill fading into hill, till the farthest stood nearly on the west coast just above the sea.

There was no stag worth following in sight, but still they lingered on the warm sunny slope: the stalker became reminiscent, and inclined—a rare thing with him—to speak of ancient days: the talk turned on the age to which deer lived. "I mind," said he—and we translate his narrative into ordinary English, though it so loses all the raciness of the original—"I mind seeing a stag which was more than fifty years old. Yes," noticing a look of astonishment, "more than fifty years old. When I was a lad I lived with my father in the forest of ——. It belonged to a great nobleman whose race is all gone now. At that time very few English came up to the north for sport, and what lets for thousands a-year now was only worth maybe a few scores of pounds for grazing, and if there were no sheep there was no rent at all. But this forest had always been forest ever since the world was made, and there was no stock on it at all. There were far fewer deer on it then than there is now: I heard that the tenant there killed nearly a hundred stags last season. But what there were were much better, far finer ones; poof!"—and he made an impatient sweep with a hand,—"one stag, I tell

you, was worth a dozen of what is got now. They were big beasts, fat big beasts, with strong, wild, beautiful heads, and I think they were easier to get at than the trash we go after now. A *b-a-a-d jance* a stag has to grow old now. The lord used to come up to his forest every year and spend a time at the stalking: he lived in a small housie which a gillie would hardly think good enough for himself in these days. There was a living-room, and two bedrooms and a kitchen, and he built a larder on at the end of the house, just a strong fine larder, the best room of them all. Well, he came up one season with a friend, and for the first time he brought a lady with him too. She was a fine-looking lass, just as fine a looking lady as you will see any time even now. He went out one day with my father, and took her with him. I've heard my father say she was a grand walker on a hill, and that he carried her over the Black River and some of the big burns in his arms. I mind his once saying that he wished it had been all rivers and burns that day, and my mother was sore vexed, and asked him what sort of talk that was. He was a quiet, silent man, and ever said little of what I am telling you.

"The day after the stag was killed two of them went away in a hurry, and then my lord went away too. When my father asked what was to

be done with the stag, 'Let it hang there till I come back,' his master said; 'I'll be back in two or three days.' By-and-by came a message to leave things about the lodge just as they were, and not to touch anything; and by-and-by, later, there was another word from my lord's agent, who lived in Edinburgh, to board up all the windows, and leave things alone. No doubt my father wondered at the word, but he did as he was bid. After a while there came up strong sheets of thin iron, and a letter saying he was to put these over the places too. He had grudged sorely to leave the good venison wasting, but he knew his master was ever determined about his work being done, so he did it, and shut all light out of the house and the larder. My lord was under thirty years of age when this took place, and he lived to be seventy; but he never came back to the forest. Whiles there would be a letter saying he was coming next month or next year, but he never came. The house soon got sadly wasted, and part fell in; but the larder was new and strong, with a fine slate roof, and it stood the weather well. The place was so out of the way that few people came to it, and few kent about what had happened, and then my mother died, and after that my father never spoke about it to any one. He got his wages as forester, and now and then the agent came up and had a day or two after the deer and

stopped in our house: if he said aught I never heard of it. My lord and my father died in the same year—in the spring of 1837.

"I was a lad of fifteen then, living with my sister, who was a year or two older. We had to go down into the low country to get situations, and I made up my mind before I went that I would look into the larder and see what was there. There was little in the house—a few bits of glass and china in the kitchen, and some old rusted iron pots and rotten bedding and chairs, and such-like. The larder was in wonderful good order. I mind it made me queer to think that no sunlight had gotten into the place for forty years till I broke in a corner of the door and prised it off its hinges. And I was *feart*," said the old man with great emphasis, "when I stood inside. There was a thick heap of dust lying below the hooks on which the stag had hung; the small bones had gone to dust too, but the big ones and the skull were still whole and awful yellow. The horns were quite fresh. I gave them a bit rub, and they seemed as if they were only a year old instead of half a hundred, for I knew fine by the look of them that the stag had been an old one. It was a ten-point head with a wide span and long points, but a thin horn; the beast had been going back. There was nothing else in the place but a whetstone and a gully lying by it, just where it had been put that

night after they had skinned the stag. I thought of taking away the skull, but I was feared to, and I never had another chance, for that night the place was in a blaze, and all that could be burnt went in the fire. I had lit some paper in the house to see about me, and I doubt left some sparks behind. Then my sister and I went away, and from that day to this I have never been back."

"Did you ever hear anything about the lady?" asked the other man.

"Nothing, or nothing that was worth the hearing—or the telling," replied the stalker.

"You have been stalking in ——?" he asked, after a long silence; "you will mind the Long Corrie — it's more a glen than a corrie — which runs down from the little lochans to the big one? Well, I was coming down that glen one evening with my master and a gillie. We had got a stag that afternoon by one of the little lochs, a decent beast with one strong horn. My master was tired that evening, and was walking slowly down the path. There is a good pony-path there now, but at the time I am speaking of, more than forty years ago, there was only a poor kind of a track, which kept near the burn all the way to the loch. The gillie and I were behind a little; suddenly, in front of us, we heard the sound of men laughing and talking. My master stopped, and we came

up with him and listened. Just in front of us, but out of sight yet, was more than one man, and what they could be doing in the forest so far from any house or road at that time of evening—it was October, and nearer six than five o'clock — we could not think. The laughing and the talking came on; shrill and loud and quick it was; I never heard men laugh or talk like that, either before or since. And then they came round the corner; there were four of them; they were all in black, and seemed to have white cloths about their necks, and gey white faces as far as we could tell. Half of their faces and necks were hid from us, for the four were bearing a coffin on their shoulders: they were swaying about, and laughing as they came along. Well, sir, if it was a strange thing for four men in black clothes to be in a deer-forest with night coming on, that was a small matter compared with what they had with them.

"The track they were on went up for some three miles, to the place we had just come from, and then ended in peat-hags, and there was not a house or cottage or shelter of any kind whatever beyond it to which it was possible for them to get that night. Peter Mactavish's was the nearest house, and that was fully seventeen miles away, and across such a country as men could never bear a coffin in the day-time, let alone at night.

So you may believe that we stared at the black people in front of us, and it was only because we all saw it that we believed our eyes. Then I heard my master clear his throat a little, as he often did when he was going to speak—when he was thinking what he was going to say—and the men came to a stand with their burden, and stopped their laughing and queer talk, and glowered at us. The words were long coming from my master's throat—if it was as dry as mine, I'm no wondering at that — and before he got them out they were useless. The track there lay high above the burn, maybe three hundred feet or so, and the slope down to it was not a precipice exactly, but near it, and steep and rocky, with bits of heather growing among the stones. Before a word was said the four men and the coffin lurched off the path, and went crashing down the hillside: we saw them for a little, swaying about just as they had done before above, and then lost sight of them, and then we heard a crash like as if the wood was broken up, and stones rattling and leaping downwards. And we heard more, and the sound set my teeth on edge, and I believe made my hair stand up: we heard again that queer laughing, just when one would expect to have heard cries of pain and fear. They rolled down, down to the bottom, and then there was quiet: we went on a few yards, and there was an

ill close smell in the fresh air—just where they had been standing."

"And what happened?"

"Nothing happened: we went down to look at the place. We went the next morning. My master said it was no use going then, and we thought he was right; and, sir, you may believe me or not, but there was no coffin, and no black men at the bottom of the place, and no mark on the slope of any one having ever gone down it. We could not see a stone out of its place: it took us all our time in the daylight to get down, so you may know what sort of ground it was. And there was nothing."

"Well, what happened?" asked the other again.

"Nothing. Peter Mactavish lived for twenty years after: we thought *it* might have been for him. There was a man lost on the west march that winter — a poor tramping body who had missed his way. I mind, too, my cow died that Martinmas, and Christina—that's my wife's sister's child — fell into the fire, and was sorely burnt before they got her out. And that was all."

"It was unsatisfactory not to know something about those men."

"It was a deal more satisfactory to know nothing about them at all," said the old stalker briskly. "The less kent about such folk the

better. And," he added reverently, "God preserve all of us from ever meeting the like of them again!"

The sun shone warm on the heather above the beallach: its mellow rays lit up the great flat which lay to the eastward, dotted and lined with brown ridges and little peaks. The listener forced his thoughts away from the unpleasant tale: just above him, at some infinitely remote period of the world's history, ice on its retreat had left a mighty cube of rock poised slantwise on another block as large. He thought of the strange eyes which must have regarded them, in times before Scotland had a name or a history, of people who must have passed by just where he was resting, and gone through that place, of strange unknown beasts to whose dens it had been a passage.

"What a sight it would be," he exclaimed, "to see all the deer which have ever gone through there, go through there now before us!"

"That would be a strange and wonderful sight," agreed the stalker; "there would be many hundreds,—there would be many thousand millions."

"There would be some noble heads," the other said. He lay back on the sun-warmed heather and thought of the ancient days. Perhaps in five hundred centuries some being would sit here and wonder as he was wondering. Those pre-

historic people found it no more strange to gaze on prehistoric creatures than he did to look at a stag now.

Suddenly his eye, carelessly wandering over the flat to the east, caught sight of movement; a closer look showed him this was caused by deer, and that they were coming up-wind towards the pass. There were about fifty, and he could see by the glass they were all hinds. They came on and on. "Now," he thought, "they are not more than a mile away; when they reach that little burn they will get our wind." But the deer passed the burn and came steadily westward, until half a mile only lay between them and the beallach. It was strange that not one of a hundred nostrils should feel the taint in the air, and the watcher looked to where his companion sat, a few feet away: the old man was sitting up intently staring at them with a puzzled expression on his face.

Still the hinds came on, and now it was apparent that they were not alone, but that following into the burn that they had left—dotting its steep sides with their light brown and duns—were more deer. And behind these came yet more: as fast as one mass filed out of the hollow it was occupied by others. The watcher turned his glass on a ridge a mile beyond the burn which had been his mark—

that too was covered with them; he looked farther east and saw still more; he fixed it on the slope of a hill some six miles away, and plain enough on the skyline he saw them there, a ragged line. The four-mile flat below him, the great easily rising slope stretching for miles towards the south, the broken ground to the left, were all full of deer advancing in an interminable procession towards the ridge on which the men lay.

By this time the first noticed hinds were only three or four hundred yards off the little pass, and the wind was blowing fair in their faces. This fact might not carry much significance to a townsman or low-country man, but to one who knew the ways of deer it seemed only a little less than a miracle—it *was* a miracle: here was a herd of deer, with a face hundreds of yards wide and many scores deep, advancing up-wind with no signs of nervousness or fear right in the teeth of men not a quarter of a mile away. It was a phenomenon that the most ancient and experienced of foresters could hardly have dreamt of, much less have seen.

Then it came into one of those men's minds that the lightly-spoken wish of half an hour ago was going to be fulfilled; that it was about to be given to him to see what he had asked to see, and a great fear came upon him. To get up, to ask

counsel from his companion, to speak at all, became beyond his power; he could only lie there and look at what was to be. The deer came on in orderly ranks, with no stopping or peering or nervous examination of the ground in front of them. In a few minutes the foremost entered the neck of the beallach, and here their ranks, confined by its narrowness, became closer. It was a short gunshot only across: they came and passed below him, and went through the two or three hundred yards of passage, and out into the open country beyond, and not one of them showed the faintest sign of noticing their enemies. The first few hundred deer were all hinds and calves.

There passed then through that narrow beallach all the deer that at one time or another had passed through it when alive: hinds, not to be numbered, with their calves; the stags of last year, the stags of ten years ago, the stags of last century or a dozen centuries ago; the great stags of times of which history can give no account, of periods of which geologists can only guess at. With perfect silence they passed through, in order as their place had been,—the antlers of a hundred years ago dwarfed by those that followed, and these again looking small and poor in comparison with what was to come. There was no rattling of sharp hoofs on the stones, no sinking in and sudden pulling out of delicate feet in the peaty turf; a

dozen hinds of to-day scampering by would have made a dozen times as much clamour as this great host. The myriads of dull eyes looked at the watchers, and each creature passed on in its rank, with no start or quickening of pace, with no acknowledgment or recognition of their presence. There was no confusion or hurry or jostling at the entrance to the pass; each knew its place and kept it.

On the far side of the pass was a little spring often visited by thirsty stalkers: there was a light hazy mist hanging about the spring, and at times it seemed to the watcher that he could see an indistinct form stationary beside it, and that when passing the place there was some slight movement of the deer towards it, as if they turned their heads that way. It was difficult to make out anything clearly: now he fancied he saw some outline high above the moving throng, and now that his eyes were deceived by some rock or shaded hollow of the hill. But of a sudden a puff of light wind blew through the gully and gently opened a passage through the mist, and then he saw that his first impression had been a right one. The ground here was thickly carpeted by faded asphodels, and their dull red leaves, catching the sun for an instant, shone brightly out. Here stood, as motionless as if she had been carved out of white marble, a great

hind; she stood with head turned at right angles to the passage and long lines of deer. On her back sat a stately figure: he caught sight for a little moment of a beautiful eager face, and of a body bending forwards as if examining the ranks which were passing in silent procession before her. The watcher shut his frightened eyes for a moment, and when he opened them the figure was stooping by the spring. Then the shreds of mist blew together again, and formed a dense veil, and shut out everything.

The great pageant was over: it had seemed long in passing, but as with a start and a shudder the young man stood up, he saw that the shadow of the hill had crept but a very little farther towards the east—just sufficient to cover the place where he had been lying. The stalker was asleep, with a troubled scared look on his lined face, and at the touch of the other's hand on his shoulder started as if he had been struck. He stared uneasily towards the flat, into the pass, and then got up and walked straight down to the spring. There was a tiny patch of soft silvery sand here, among the green moss where the water ran out, and on its smooth surface was a mark as if a naked foot had pressed it. With an eager exclamation the younger man pointed to it; the next moment the heavy boot of the stalker came down on the sand, and the footprint—if it was one—was obliterated for ever.

# AN OLD SALMON-POACHING STORY.

ONE May morning, nearly sixty years ago, a man left his home at the head of Glen Nant, and crossed over the bit of wild moorland which lies between the head of that valley and the Pass of Awe or Brander. He skirted the little wood below his house of Barrachander, where, early though it was, the wood-pigeons were already cooing, passed through a chain of small lochs, and got out on to the heather near the old ruined tower of Balliemore. Long ago this man's ancestors had been people of note in the world: in rough troublesome days their house was a strong one, both in itself and its position. It stands—what is left of it—in a cup or sheltering hollow among the hills, unobtrusive, unnoticeable, and no doubt many an unfriendly traveller has unwittingly passed it by. But at last came the evil day, and it perished, how, or in what period—with what stress of life and shouting and bloodshed—

*The Pass of Brander (looking West).*

From a sketch by FRED. NOEL PATON.

the solemn hills standing around alone know. The burning of Airlie or the siege of such a place as Inverlochy are recorded in history, but she has nothing to say about the end of such a humble mountain fortress as this. On one of the lochs near is an island, with the remains of a building on it; this is called the "Charter-House," the Safety-Place for Balliemore. As it once gave protection to men, so it does now to birds, and the wild ducks and gulls and curlew of Loch Tromlie find in its shelter the quiet and security which it once afforded its old owners.

It has been said that if the last trump had sounded at the end of the great war with France at the beginning of last century, no one but a Macleod would have risen up out of the graveyard of Dunvegan. The MacCorquodales could hardly make the same boast as the great western clan, but their dust must lie thick in the little moorland churchyard of Kilchrenan. It is a good many years since the chief actor in this sketch joined his brethren there. Near his grave is a huge stone erected to the memory of a world-renowned head of a great house, to "Cailean Mor, slain on the Streang of Lorn, A.D. 1294." Next to this is another monument commemorating six Campbells of position, four of whom were killed in some fierce fight in the neighbourhood. So he lies in goodly company, with many members of his clan, and his

clan's enemies, side by side with ancient chiefs and warriors, and freebooters, and smugglers, and decent homelike nineteenth-century sheep-farmers and crofters.

It is not likely that Archibald MacCorquodale ever troubled himself very much about his ancestors, or his own humble position. Poor man as he was—earning a precarious living by hard work—he was probably very much better off in most ways than any of them were. He never was obliged to carry off himself and his household gods at a moment's notice to the safety island; he never was awakened at midnight by an ominous flare in the sky, telling him (as it had often told his forebears) that the stacks or cowhouse was aglow; and when he left his home he knew he would find on his return the small wild-looking black-cattle feeding quietly about the croft,—not hear of them being furiously driven—a panting, lowing, exhausted herd—to the far-away safe keeping of some lord of the country stronger and bolder than himself. He cut peats and dried them; he made quantities of coarse moorland hay; he worked on his rough, badly-drained fields without being discouraged at the exceeding scantiness of the crops they gave him in return for his labours. He made long journeys twice a-year to Kilmichael, and spent much time and energy—generally in vain—in trying to persuade other people that his two or

three beasts were fat instead of thin—well-bred instead of ill-bred—handsome instead of ill-favoured—the pick of the country round instead of its black shots. And for pastime he did a little poaching; as salt to savour his labours, quite as much as for the sake of varying his fare, he killed grouse and hares and salmon whenever he got a chance. Lights were often seen at night in this district at that period, but they were harmless bits of bog-pine roots, used for burning fish-haunted waters instead of substantial byre or rick.

The sun was barely peeping round the shoulder of Ben Bhurich when Archie got on the high bit of tableland where he could look down on the river Awe. The day gave promise of being a very hot one, but as yet a dull white frosty mist lay over the hills, filling up the hollows and corries with its cotton-wool-like masses: every step he took left its trace behind (how often must it have happened in old fighting days that a man has been followed to his death by such trail as this!), and he was soon wet above the knee by the drip from the heather and long grass. In these times, when salmon are scarce and wary, the frosty morning which ushers in a broiling day is not loved by a fisherman, but at that happy period things were different, and better, and he must have been a novice indeed who could not do something almost any time during the season with the fish in the Awe.

When MacCorquodale reached the watershed, he looked down on a district which, save in one respect, sixty years have done little to change. The dark river, flecked with white here and there, made its rapid way to the sea; beyond it stood up the bare grey-green face of Ben Cruachan; and the woods of Inverawe showed, as they show nowadays, against Loch Etive, and the granite face of Bonawe. Far away to the west you can see Morvern, and the higher peaks of Mull. Till quite recently the place must have looked just the same as it has looked for centuries. The railway is the only change—a mighty convenience, but the thin line of iron doubtless takes something from the loneliness of what used to be one of the wildest passes in Scotland.

Archie ran quickly down the hillside till he came to a great rock in the shelter of which lay his rod, with reel and line on it ready for work. Rod and line and fisherman have long been resolved into their component parts, but the reel lies before the writer now—a large wooden one, black painted, worm-eaten, but still in good order; it has a hole in it through which the rod was run. He put on a fly, dark-bodied, with grey heron-wings, very different to the brilliant "Doctors" and "Butchers" which are chiefly in use now, and began to fish his pool. Carefully he fished it—a step and a cast—a step and a cast, the while going through the mental

process of anticipation at the start, surprise at the negative result of the first half-dozen throws, disappointment when no boil in the water or pull beneath it awaited him at the first likely place. Before, however, disappointment had time to change into disgust he felt the pull, raised his rod a little, and found the strain increase; saw the water open enough to let him catch a glimpse of some part of a salmon, and then as rapidly close.

Archie came up the hill a little to have more command over the fish; a thrill of joyful exultation ran through him, and the frown on his face indicated only concentrated attention. With feet well apart, finger ready to check the line, and eyes following anxiously the point where it, slowly moving, cut the water tight as a strained steel wire, he stood on the bank, perhaps at that moment the happiest man in all the far-stretching parish of Glenorchy and Innishail. But near are joys and sorrows in this world; close together, ever watching mankind, sit Fortuna and the Fates.

From behind a grey rock on the opposite side of the river rose up now a grey man—long of leg, tough in sinew, stern of countenance; no greeting gave he to the fisherman, no friendly congratulations or applause. He stalked down to a convenient boulder, which commanded a good view of the pool, and sat down on it; he got out his

pipe—his eye the while glued to the point of interest—and soon the gentle wind carried over to Archie's nostrils the fragrant scent of his tobacco.

A Prime Minister, who, thinking he had a certain majority on a critical division, finds the Opposition have it instead, could hardly be more overwhelmed than Archie was at this bodeful appearance. Fishing was fairly free at the time we are writing of, because, as a rule, it was of little value, but on this part of the Awe the owner had lately been asserting his rights and warning off trespassers. Archie had offended, and had been caught; had offended again, with the same result; had offended again—and the patience of the authorities had at length been worn out. So the edict had gone forth that if ever again—only once—he was caught dipping a fly in the river, then would he have to leave his little cottage in Glen Nant, and the tiny well-loved farm,—that never more on all those wide lands would he find a resting-place for his feet, "Not if you lived for a hundred and seventy years!" added the factor, shaking a quill pen at him. But word had come to Archie the previous night that his enemy the keeper had been summoned to see a sick son far away up at Loch Tulla in the Blackmount, a long day's journey for an active man. And lo! regardless of that affection which is felt by

all but the basest of men, this unnatural father was lying in wait for him here!

So it came about that Archibald MacCorquodale stood chained to the river by a big salmon within seventy yards of a man whom he looked on as a natural enemy,—from whom he always felt inclined to fly even when merely pursuing his natural lawful occupation. His first thought was to break his line and be off. But what would he gain by that? He would not so shake off his foe. And there was another reason. There is a grim story of a laird of the old school who was busily engaged in playing a very heavy fish when a messenger came to tell him of the sudden and serious illness of his wife. The fisherman, reasoning that his wife might recover, but that he was never likely to get hold of such a monstrous specimen of the *Salar* tribe again, could not bring himself to loose his hold, so sent for further tidings. "The mistress is dying," was the answer: but the laird now found that he was engaged in a struggle with such a creature as Tweedside in all its history had never seen the like of, and again he hardened his heart; and it was only when he heard that all was over that he reluctantly broke, and went up to the house. "She was a good wife to you, laird!" cried a weeping and sympathising retainer. "Ay, she was that, Jeanie, she was a'

that!" said the disconsolate widower; "but eh, woman! yon was the varra mucklest fish that eyes of man ever yet saw on Tweed!"

The crofter felt something like the old laird: he had not seen the fish, beyond the merest glimpse of it as it slowly edged away out into the stream after being hooked, but he judged from the weight put on his hand and arm, and from the strain on the rod, that if it were only once on the bank, good kipper to eat with his porridge would be plentiful in his house for many a day to come. Always provided—and this was indeed a very large "if"—no one prevented him carrying it off when it *was* landed. So in a swither of discomfiture and uncertainty Archie played his fish for five or ten minutes, and then, unable to bear the silence any longer, cried out to the man on the other shore—

"It's a fine day this!"

"It'll be a day you'll be wishing it was night, before I've done wi' ye!" was the grim answer that came back, and Archie almost fell into the river at the response.

"It'll be a bad day's work for me this!" he cried out almost in a whine.

"It'll be all that, my man!" replied the keeper cheerfully.

The fish, so passive hitherto, had behaved as large fish often do behave,—he had shown no

hurry or undignified alarm. The disagreeable thing he had got into his mouth would soon be swallowed or spat out. So he sailed up and down the pool, unwilling to allow that there was any force guiding or compelling him from above. Then all of a sudden he got irritated, and made a furious rush across and down the stream without breaking water. The stiff unoiled reel screeched as it had never done before, and a red streak showed on the man's thumb as the coarse horse-hair line cut it almost to the bone. The salmon nearly ran aground in the shoaling water on the keeper's side, and then turned and went up-stream again, and the latter saw the great white belly flash under the thin water as the mighty rudder of a tail twisted it round as on a pivot. Something like five feet of blue-brown back came shooting up the pool close to the bank, and then disappeared like a ghost in the deep stream above. Archie thought he had hold of a prize, but the other knew it, and his experienced eye told him that he had just seen the heaviest salmon which had ever come into his ken either in or out of the Awe. "By ——, he is a fish!" he cried to himself, as with straining eyes he followed the wake in the water.

Great, indeed, was this keeper's wrath and indignation. It was bad enough that this poaching crofter should be at the river at all, but that

he should fall on such a piece of luck as this was almost more than mortal man could bear. It made matters still worse for the spectator to think that he had been sitting for half an hour within twenty yards of the fish, and might have been playing him himself—if only he had known. The thought flashed through his brain that perhaps this was the way in which he was to be punished for the elaborate manœuvre by which MacCorquodale had been decoyed to the river.

If Rory MacGilp was miserable, Archibald was in a much more parlous state. He would have felt very diffident at working a salmon before this keepers' critical eye under the most favourable and lawful circumstances, and to do justice to himself he would require the ever-ready help of a thoroughly sympathetic friend. Indeed it would be incorrect to speak at this period of the fish as a captive. Archie was the captive: the creature did what it liked with him; moved up and down the slack water just as it chose; stopped and sank, and dug its nose down into the bottom when it wanted without asking any leave from the man on the bank. If such things were to be done in the green tree, what might be expected in the dry? If the salmon was all-powerful in the smooth, quiet pool, what would be his proceedings when he went seawards—into the wild rapids, and among the dangerous sunken rocks down the

stream? Archie felt he *would* go down sooner or later—it was merely a question of time; and the perspiration poured from his forehead, his legs shook, and his hands trembled as he moved to and fro along the grassy bank. Whether he landed it, or whether it broke him, the end would be the same; certainly this time the offence would not be overlooked: he might say farewell to Barrachander, and bonnie Loch Tromlie, and green primrose-haunted Glen Nant.

The fish moved down to the tail of the pool, and sunk himself there; he got his nose up-stream, and began to "jig" at the line, each jig taking him a little farther down, and each vibration communicating a dreadful shock to the heart of the man above. "In five minutes," thought Archie, "I'll be likely a mile down, with my rod broken, and that old heathen grinning at me!" Oh, for a friend now!

"Rory!" he cried out softly to his enemy—"Rory!" But no answer came back across the water. Rory sat like a carved statue on his rock.

"Mr MacGilp!—my fingers is cut to the quick! Will ye no pitch a stone in below him and turn him up?" Still there was no answer. "My back's fairly broken!" cried Archie piteously.

"I'm right glad to hear it," roared back the keeper—"of that same back!"

"He's forty pounds weight!" cried Archie, appealingly.

"HE'S SIXTY!" screamed Rory, jumping off his rock, and dancing about on the bank. "You poaching deevil! I hope he'll break your neck and drown you afterwards!"

"Oh—what'll I do if he goes down?" howled the other man; "he's off—he's off—what'll I do if he goes down?"

The fish lay now on the top of the rapid stream, furiously flapping his tail.

"Give him line!" shouted Rory, "you great ——!" "But what am I doing?" he cried to himself. "Let him break—I hope he will!"

Archie lowered the point of his rod, and the fish —as they so often will—stopped at the strain being taken off. But he was too far down to get back,—foot by foot he walloped down; he was fairly out of the pool, he got into the stream, he struggled against it for a moment, and the next he was raging away down the river: now deep down in it, now showing his huge breadth of tail at the top, turning over and over like a porpoise, careless where he went so long as he got clear.

Archie stood in the old place on the bank with his mouth open and most of his hundred yards of line run out, as incapable of checking its movements as if it had been a hundredweight of iron.

"Rin! rin! after him!" roared Rory, forget-

ting himself again. "Keep him in—— But let him alone, you fool!" was again his second thought; "let him be! he'll never get by the point!"

The keeper ran down the bank, hopping highly over the boulders, and never taking his eye off the bit of foaming water where he judged the runaway to be; and Archie, his first stupefaction over, did the same, and got a slight pull on the salmon some two hundred yards farther down.

Rory, when coming up in the morning, had left his rod here, and now got possession of it, and of his gaff, which latter he slung over his back. A little lower the river turned, and the two men and the fish followed the curve, and got—the last at any rate—into a bad bit of rock-protected stream, dangerous enough now, though much worse in low water. Whatever knowledge the fisherman had of the place was clean driven out of him by the agitation he was in, and it would have been purely by luck, and not by any sort of guidance, that he would have found a safe passage through. But every inch of the passage was known to the other: every rock and shoal was as clearly photographed on his mind as if it lay before him in bodily shape; the information which for fifty years had slowly percolated to his brain was complete; his hands twitched and his heart leapt when he saw the salmon make for a bad bit of water, and he was

quite unable to stop himself from shouting out directions, though all the time he was heartily hoping that the fish would break his hold. The advice, which was plentifully accompanied with abuse of Archie, was always immediately followed by denunciation of himself—the giver of it.

"Keep your rod west and bring him in!" roared the keeper; "are ye no' seeing the muckle rock there?"—the said rock being at the time six feet under water. Then to himself, "Whisht, you old fool, and let him cut!" "Let him come in my side, you black thief!" he thundered again, "or he'll be round yon stob!"—"and I hope he will, and be damned to him! If it isn't enough to sicken a fox to see him wi' such a fish as that!"

By that time Archie had got three-quarters of a mile down the river, and was much more exhausted than the salmon. What with keeping a tight hold on it when sulking, and hopping among slippery smooth rocks and stones when it was lively, listening to the threatening advice from the other side—the penalty, moreover, which he would have to pay for his sport ever being present in his mind—he thought he had never had such a time of it since he was born, and felt that the hardest day's work he had ever done was child's play to what he was going through.

"If I was only quit of this cursed fish for good and all!" he now thought to himself; "ay, if I

was lying on my back wi' lumbago like Johnnie Ross, as I was pityin' sae much!"

The playing of a salmon is not often monotonous, and is sometimes exciting in the very highest degree, but, alas! how hopeless a task it is to attempt to communicate the exhilaration by written words! The reel "screeches" or "whirrs," according as it is well-oiled, or a rusty implement like our poacher's. The line "cuts the water," the gaff "went with a soft plunge" into the thick back. "Fresh up from the sea with the lice on him." All these words are appropriate and expressive, and they have been used over and over again hundreds and hundreds of times; scarce an account of a day's salmon-fishing is complete without them. The horrid vibration of the line as a big fish "jigs" at it, and every thrill runs like an electric shock right into the very heart of the rod-holder, has been referred to in almost every account of a tussle with a heavy salmon. How stale the words are! how difficult to put in fresher or better ones! and yet how very freshly every individual shock comes home in practice! Each jig you think will be the last—will find out the weak place in the hold, or the gear, and he will be off. I was once playing a big salmon in a very heavy rough pool: he was nearly done, and was being slowly wound up to the kneeling gaffsman, when he gave two or three

wriggles and slipped off the hook. The heavy stream kept the line pretty tight, and the other man never noticed what had happened, or that the rod-top was straight. Then I suddenly jerked the fly out of the water, right in front of him, as if preparing to make a new cast, and shall never forget his face as he turned round and stared at me. And I would not like to put down here what he said.

What a cold-blooded animal must that acquaintance of Mr Stoddart's have been who considered the hooking of a fish to be the only thing worth accomplishing, and who was accustomed then to "hand the rod to an attendant," to spare himself what he was pleased to call the "drudgery" of playing it! How easily might a master of the English language utterly fail to convey to his audience almost any part of the effect produced on him at times when playing a great salmon in a wide, rough, rock-sprinkled river! He has him well on—the fish of the season—the fish of many seasons—perhaps of his life. The next hour will see him the happiest or the most miserable of men. Think of the feelings of the late Mr Dennison —not a novice but a fine fisherman—when, after eight hours' work on the Ness, the handle of his reel caught in his watch-chain, and the salmon broke him—the salmon of his life escaped! Grilse must get off at times, and ten, and twenty, and

even thirty pounders, but surely monsters ought not to be allowed to escape and make a man's life a howling desolation for a week, with a mournful reminiscence attached to it ever afterwards. The very magnitude of such calamities sometimes makes people preternaturally calm: we have seen a friend, not remarkable for extreme moderation in his language, reel up the late tightly held and now merely dancing fly, after a long fruitlessly ending battle, without saying a word. Like the man who, pulling up at the top of a long hill, looked back and saw the flour which ought to have been in his cart whitening it for a mile—he was not equal to it. Often fish escape through no fault of the fisherman, often through his want of skill, but what when the loss is to be put down to pure carelessness? Think of the feelings of those hapless beings—we heard of another of them the other day—who, when putting the line on the reel, omit to fasten the one to the other, and see their salmon go off with the eighteenth part of a mile of cord trailing behind him! The last victim of this sort we know of was standing on a bridge and couldn't follow. John Bright is said to have taken a header after a line so disappearing.

On a big river a man will have 120 yards of line on his reel: seldom, indeed, will he require the whole of this. But if even sixty yards are run out the fish is a long way from you, and with a

strong wind blowing down the stream it is very difficult to know what strain you are putting on the tackle. What a moment is that when—at such a distance—a salmon suddenly turns and comes back at you, with every chance in his favour of shaking out a light-holding hook, or getting round a rock or tree! What a dreadful sight is a big salmon jumping just opposite you, when your line lies in a huge drowned bag far below you both! worse than jigging or anything else that! There is a good illustration of what we mean in a plate in Scrope's 'Days and Nights of Salmon-Fishing,' but the angler looks singularly calm for such an emergency.

At six o'clock Archie rose his fish; at half-past seven he was more than a mile down the river, pretty well beaten. He had passed through all the mental phases we have spoken of—apprehension, hope, and deadly fear; and now, after all this manœuvring, it seemed as if the end had come, and he would be able to reel up—what he had left—and go home to make arrangements for his "flitting." The fish made a wild rush up the river, turned above a big upstanding stone, and then swam slowly down again. The line touched the stone, and Archie could not clear it; the surface was smooth, and it still ran a little, but the end was near: unless the salmon at once retraced his path, he was a free salmon soon.

A good spring landed Rory out on a green-topped slippery boulder with twelve inches of water running over it. He heard the reel opposite give out its contents in sudden uncertain jerks; he caught sight of a huge bar of yellowish-white coming wobbling down towards him—lost it—saw it again, and delivered his stroke. Up came the great wriggling, curling mass—bright silver now—out of the river: with both hands close to the gaff-head, he half lifted half dragged the fish to shore, struggling, and all but losing his footing in the passage; then up the bank with it till he was able to lie down on it and get his hand into its gills.

Twenty minutes later Archie, with a sinking heart, had crossed the bridge of Awe and travelled up the north bank. The keeper was sitting on a stone, quietly smoking, with no trace of anger on his face, and before him, on a bit of smooth thymy turf, lay a salmon such as many a man has dreamt about, but few, indeed, seen with mortal eyes. Then for the first time that day the poor crofter forgot his troubles: for half a minute his only feeling was one of intense pride—at such a victory.

"Well—he's safe now," Rory said at length.

"Ay!" replied Archie, still gaping at him.

"Erchibald," went on the keeper, "oh, man! you worked him just deevilish!" The other shook

his head deprecatingly. "Just deevilish!—frae start tae finish!"

"That was no' a bad bit o' work for a man o' my years," the keeper continued. "Gin I hadna been waiting for him there when he came by, it's little you'd have ever seen of your fish!"

"I ken that fine," said Archie.

"Gin I had no' been quick enough to slip it into him there—it would be at Bonawe he would be by this time."

"I'm believing that," replied the crofter.

"It was no' an easy job neither. Stand you on yon stane and see what footing you'll have."

"There was few could do it, indeed, Mr MacGilp."

"He was far more like a stirk to lift out of the water than a decent saumon!"

"He was, Mr MacGilp—far more, indeed, like a very heavy stirk!"

"If it hadna been my knowledge of all they sunken rocks, and shouting myself hoarse to guide you, where would you have been, my man, by this time?"

"It was your inteemate acquaintance with the stanes which saved me, indeed," once more agreed the crofter.

"There's no anither man in the whole wide world could have steered you down yon places as I did!"

"There is certainly not one in many hundred score would have taken such a vast o' trouble about it."

"I gaffed him—an' I told you the road to take him—an' saved him many a time——"

"You did all that an' more, Mr MacGilp. It's much obligeed——"

"I doubt I made the varra fly that rose him?"

"You did that, indeed," said poor Archie, hopelessly. (He had made it himself the night before.)

"Dod!" cried the keeper, "I believe I got yon muckle fish *mysell!!*"

The other stared at him.

"Erchie, lad," said the keeper,—and the voice of the man was changed now, and he spoke so softly and low it was difficult to recognise the same organ which a few minutes before had been hurling denunciations across the river,—"I've been fishing here all my life; man and boy I've been fishing here for nearly fifty years, an' I never yet had the luck to get the grip of such a fish as that!"

MacCorquodale looked at him curiously, and he was never able to say positively—he was never quite sure in his own mind—whether it was a tear which rolled down over the rough cheek or not. Then there was long silence.

"An' where will it be ye'll be flitting to?" the old man asked, in quite another tone, and so sud-

denly that it made the crofter—deep in a reverie—jump.

"Where'll I be—where—oh!—Mr MacGilp!"

"I believe I got yon muckle fish MYSELL!" with great emphasis on the last word.

Archie looked north and east and west, and then at the salmon.

"MYSELL!" as if finally and for the last time.

"I believe—that—too," said Archie, with a groan. The last three words came out with a gulp.

"Well—he'll be an ugly burden to bear away doun. But a man canna pick an' choose as he would in this world! Good day to you then, Erchibald. And you might be going on wi' that new bit o' garden you're sae proud of; I'll gie you a wheen grand potatoes—next year—for seed for't."

So MacCorquodale set out under the hot sun homewards. Once more he had a reprieve, and he wondered how it was he did not feel happier. During the exciting fight he had many times pictured to himself the little house from which he would be banished at Whitsunday, its rough meadow in front, and the peat-stacks, and the sunny untidy bit of garden, half-filled with currant bushes and ribes and southernwood, over which the bees came in the gloaming, slow flying after

*Ben Cruachan.*

From a sketch by Miss I. M. Hartley.

their afternoon labour on the moor. Now he thought only of the battle he had won, which was not to bring him in any honour now, or happy reminiscences afterwards.

"'Deed, I'll never have the chance of doing the like of yon again!" muttered the poor crofter to himself.

# SIR SIMON'S COURTSHIP.

## I.

"SHE is a good-looking girl."

"Yes, she is pretty; but she is better than pretty; she is good. I assure you, my dear Sir Simon, that it has been a real pleasure to me to watch that young person. I don't know that I have ever seen any one so devoted to her work as she is."

"Devoted to it, eh?"

"Quite devoted. The way in which the modern young woman spends her time must give occasion for sadness to any thinking person. Golf, lawn-tennis, riding, hunting even, dancing,—anything that is exciting and frivolous and useless."

"Shocking!" said Sir Simon, a pause coming which he saw he was expected to fill up.

"Quite so, most demoralising. But Miss Shaw has nothing of this kind about her. She will

*The Librarian.*

doubtless marry some day; I hope so; but not yet awhile; she is far too ardent in her studies to find any room for silly sentimentalities at present. You may depend upon it the man who wins *her* will not be chosen for his looks, or for his prowess in games of strength. Not a bit of use, my dear sir, for a mere athlete to try to gain favour in her eyes."

"Not a bit," echoed Hood. He had a long stick in his hand with which he remorselessly cut down every dandelion or thistle which came within his reach.

"Poor girl! And yet one need not be sorry for her now. I did feel at first for her, coming among strangers, and leading such a lonely life. But she has found her vocation."

"Always messing among old books," suggested the Baronet.

"Always *working* among them," replied the Rector, laying some emphasis on his verb.

It seems to me a very extraordinary thing that any one should care for such a life. I mean," noticing a frown gathering on his companion's brow, "in a young thing like that. Of course it's quite different with *us*."

"It grows on you; it's quite astonishing how the fascination grows on you. I can remember quite well when I myself cared nothing for books, —for books *as* books, that is to say. But the

love for them had seized me by the time I was fifteen, and since then it has never left me. I could show you the very branch of the lime-tree on which I used to sit on half-holidays, with a little Elzevir Horace in my hand, while the rest of my schoolfellows were playing fives or cricket, or bathing in the river."

"Ugh!" said Sir Simon, in a manner which might be taken to express wonder, or admiration, or disgust. "So you think Miss Penelope is in no hurry to marry?" he went on after a long pause.

The Rector's mind had flown back those fifty years; he seemed to be conscious once more of the fragrant scent of the old lime-tree, to hear again the music of its innumerable bees, and the cool ripple of the water below. "Oh no, quite the contrary. Let me see; she is now twenty-five; I should give her ten years. And I think I could make a pretty fair prophecy as to the sort of man her husband will be."

"What sort of a man?"

"Not a mere student. It cannot be good for any one to devote himself to a single pursuit to the exclusion of all others. That is why I occupy myself with gardening as well as parish work. Her husband will probably, I should say, be a good deal older than herself; a man of experience, well read of course, in the highest sense, and

able to direct her studies to the best possible advantage."

"A kind of literary father," suggested Sir Simon.

"Well,—a guide as well as a husband, able by his more ripe scholarship to uphold her uncertain steps. To lead her along the pleasant paths of literature; not scorning, or being impatient with her, even in her lightest moods, but gradually communicating to her his own enthusiasm and affection for the most serious studies. What could any woman want more?"

Simon thought they might, some of them, want a great deal more, but he did not say anything. The two men, the little black-coated parson and the tall soldier, walked on together to the Rectory, and behind them lay a wreck of many fair autumn plants cut down by the ruthless stick. Mr Kemp was a kind-hearted, irascible old bachelor. Any one looking at him almost might know this; and any one talking to him for half an hour would further discover that if he was not a bibliomaniac he came very near to being one. He divided his time into three portions—for his parish, his garden, and his library, repaying the latter in winter for any neglect which long spring and summer days devoted to his flowers might cause. This garden was a charmingly old-fashioned place, and its owner did not fail

to point out to his companion how, when the great enclosure at the Hall was nearly bare of them, *his* carnations still stood up in masses of cream and pink and yellow from their dull green leaves. "And I can gather violets here nearly every month in the year," said their owner, pointing with honest pride to clumps full of sweet white and pale blue flowers.

But it was not to show the soldier his flowers that the Rector had decoyed him down here. "Walk home with me," said Mr Kemp. "You've nothing to do this afternoon, and I'll give you some tea, and we can have a talk about those books in which you seem interested. And I'll give you something better than tea; I'll give you an old volume to take back with you which may be—who knows!—the nucleus of a great library. Ah, what a chance you have!—youth, leisure, and wealth. If I, with my small means and opportunities, have been able to collect what I have, what might you not do? You might become a second Lord Spencer, a second Beckford."

So Sir Simon had his tea in the dark old library where books were the sole ornament. And as he looked at the long lines of shelves, each heavily laden and crowded with divers battered volumes, he thought that in all his life he had never seen such a depressing sight. The great collection up

at the Hall was a much more cheerful affair; there was plenty of colour there, scarlet, and blue, and citron morocco, and gilding, while here and there room was found for a picture or some china. Mr Kemp despised china: he had no space for pictures; and, not being able to afford fine bindings, he affected to despise them also.

The Rector climbed cautiously up a creaking step-ladder, and after a short hunt withdrew out of its hole a small volume. It seemed to Sir Simon to be the dullest-looking and the most forlorn of all the books in the room. Its owner blew the dust off the top leaves, and handled it as delicately as if it had been a living thing. "See," he said, "my little 'Noctuae Speculum'; my old Howleglass, I shall be loath to part with you and your quaint woodcuts. I picked up that book, Sir Simon, in Sheffield, a most unlikely place, when waiting one afternoon for a train. I got it for ten shillings, but you will find it marked at more than six times that sum in Mr Quaritch's catalogue. And I give it to you, my dear sir, trusting it may be the means of stimulating those dormant faculties we were speaking of just now."

After another loving look he carefully wrapped it up in many folds of paper, and formally handed it over to its new owner, who endeavoured to express what he felt—or indeed rather took the greatest trouble *not* to express any such thing.

Hood thanked the donor as enthusiastically as he could, and then had to spend half an hour more in looking at various other treasures, all of a subfusc hue outside, and quite unintelligible when you opened them.

Now the Baronet noticed that his friend became more and more silent as the time for parting drew near, and if he had been a more acute observer he would have seen that the old gentleman cast many a look towards the parcel containing Howleglass, which betrayed itself by the bulge in the pocket where it lay. At last his feelings became too strong for him. "I tell you what I shall ask you to do," said he. "I'll beg you to give me that book back again, and I will either have it nicely bound for you, or find another which will be more suitable for my little gift. On second thoughts I do not think that that little work is so much in your line just now, as something else might be. Exchange, you know, is no robbery," said the parson, laughing rather nervously, and wondering whether his little plan would succeed. But Sir Simon handed over the parcel with great alacrity; he was delighted to get rid of it. Its old owner joyfully received back his treasure, and quickly restored it to its proper place. The thought of that empty space would have given some unhappiness to the bibliophile, might perhaps have cost him some hours of sleep that night.

II.

Sir Simon Hood had been born when Venus was in the ascendant. The fairies who had attended at his birth had been very bountiful to him; they had given him health, and beauty of a manly kind, and riches, and a good position in the world. But then, as a set-off to these good things, that other fairy, for whose presence on our natal days we have all had sometimes to groan, appeared, and added a too susceptible heart; a small counterbalance, it may be thought, for so much that was good. This fairy willed it that, when her godchild came under the eye of a woman with any pretensions to comeliness, he came also under her influence. He fell in love with his nurse, and with his dame at Eton; though possibly there was something politic in the last admiration. He fell in love with his tutor's daughter before he got into the army, and with his colonel's daughter after he had performed that feat. It was a perpetual source of wonder to his friends how he managed to get out of the many scrapes into which the blind goddess led him; and certainly, if the malignant fairy had had her way altogether, her victim must have passed down the corridors of time as an awful example of the effects of love.

Miss Shaw's coming to Casterton had caused something of a sensation in that quiet neighbourhood. When old Mr Sunbridge, the librarian at the Hall, died, his successor was immediately sought for. Mr Kemp wrote voluminous letters to various correspondents in all parts of the kingdom; Sir John's London lawyers busied themselves in the same direction, and even Sir John himself made inquiries in his own lazy fashion. And one and all of these people took it for granted that the new guardian of the books was to be something like the old; like the frail bent man who had haunted the library from a time to which few knew the contrary, who was rarely seen out of it, and who seldom raised his voice above a kind of whisper, unless when defending the rarity or authenticity of one of the treasures in it. So, when one fine morning Sir John announced that inquiries might cease, and that he had come to an arrangement with a lady, the neighbours stood agape. Things looked still more dubious when the lady arrived; and if Miss Shaw had heard one half the things which were said about her she would have found an occupation in blushing for the rest of her life.

"Really, my dear Blunt," said the Rector, "I fear you have been rather rash. I say nothing about her experience, though I doubt if she has a single qualification for the work."

"Oh, she'll learn," said Sir John cheerfully.

"But she's so young,—and good-looking."

"She'll mend of that too, my dear Parson, especially of the first."

"And it's a risky thing introducing her into a house where there is no mistress."

"Why, my dear Kemp, you talk as if Casterton was a monastery. I suppose between housemaids, and dairymaids, and scullerymaids, to say nothing of laundrymaids and a cook, there must be twenty women in the place."

"Yes, but there is a housekeeper to look after them."

"And there's an aunt coming to look after this young woman. And besides, she isn't going to live in the house."

When the aunt came it didn't mend matters very much. There is no absolute necessity that the word should connote an elderly female with spectacles and mittens, and yet this is what most of the people interested in the matter had expected. And when a lady of prepossessing appearance, and looking only two or three years older than Penelope, arrived, tongues wagged more freely than ever. But Sir John had quite half a century of rigidly respectable life behind him; and he was, moreover, even if his record had not been so satisfactory, too big a magnate in the county to be interfered with, much less

quarrelled with, unless it was absolutely necessary to do so.

So the cold shoulder was given to the girl, not to him, and her life at first, in the little lodge which was handed over to her, was a dreary one, especially when her *chaperone* was away. After seeing her niece established in her new home that lady returned to London, and only made her appearance in the country at rare and brief intervals. But there was in reality no mystery in the matter. The new-comer was neither Sir John's daughter, as some hinted, nor his mistress, as other better-informed busybodies asserted. The truth was too uninteresting and matter-of-fact for the good people of the district to take in. Penelope had seen the advertisement, had obtained an interview with the Baronet, and applied for the situation. She had been told that it was quite impossible, and had pleaded anew; she had been told that it was impossible, and had reiterated her appeal; Sir John then said he would consider the matter and let her know, whereupon, with tears this time, Penelope implored him to give her a favourable reply at once. And a very much surprised man was Sir John, as he walked that morning down the drive an hour late to meet his keepers, to think that he had done so.

We may be sure that Miss Shaw was well

watched during her first few weeks at Casterton. Many curious eyes were on her, and on her goings out and comings in. But even the most accurate and censorious failed to find in her behaviour any traces of the many deadly sins for which they searched. She was regular in her attendance at the library; she rarely went far from home; she came to church whenever it was fairly possible to get there, and some hearts at any rate were touched by her look, as she sat there, Sunday after Sunday, by herself. The Rector called as in duty bound, and found no signs of the cloven hoof; the Doctor's wife was almost disappointed in her correct behaviour. And so it came to pass that, a year or so after Penelope's arrival, she had settled down into a resident, entitled almost in her turn to turn up her little nose at new-comers; liked by most of the country folk, disliked certainly by none,—unless temporarily by some village maiden, who found that her new hat and jacket looked, somehow, common and gaudy when contrasted with the Londoner's quiet and plain attire.

In the three-volume novel a long description of the personal appearance of the heroine is expected; in this humble narrative it is not necessary to devote half a dozen pages to such an account, but still something must be said on the subject. Penelope was neither tall nor short, neither fat

nor thin. An envious or ill-natured person could find many faults with her figure and her features. She was not handsome or stately, and certainly she was not beautiful, while the word *pretty* seems to convey something of diminutiveness to which also she was a stranger; yet *pretty* would be the adjective most commonly applied to her, unless the observer was old-fashioned enough to use its synonym *comely*. The aforesaid three-volume people lay as a rule stress on a girl's hair, on her nose, and mouth, and eyes, and on the whiteness or otherwise of her skin. Penelope's hair was of a sufficiently common shade of brown. It is very hackneyed nowadays to say that a young woman's nose is tip-tilted or turns up. One of Mr Locker-Lampson's maidens had a "fascinating cock" to her nose. Penelope had a cock to hers, whether fascinating or not depending on the humour and mood of the observer. Her mouth was a good useful mouth; when she was ill her lips were pale; when she was well, which she nearly always was, they were as red a little pair as you could meet with anywhere. And her eyes seemed various colours, according to the various lights in which they were seen. We once heard an old Highlander say, as he looked admiringly at a beautiful little pig which he had drawn out of the scalding-tub and carefully scraped, "She's as white's a leddy!" And we

can say no more or less about Penelope. Finally, to wind up somewhat too long a list, her feet peeped in and out beneath her petticoats just as unlike mice as they could be.

III.

"DEAREST JULIA,—You will never guess what happened to me yesterday. I went to a dinner-party! I was sitting in the library in the morning, wishing that all the books in the world (especially the old ones) were burnt to ashes, when Mr Kemp came in in a tremendous hurry to say that a friend of his, a great bibliomaniac (only he didn't use that word) was coming to dine at the Hall, and Sir John wanted me to come too! I thought, in a second, of that shabby old black frock,—don't you know every stitch of it!—and I said I really couldn't. I think he fancied that I didn't like going without any other ladies, or wanted a formal invitation, for he went off and in a short time Sir John came in, and was very kind, and said he hoped I would come, and he would ask old Mrs Merryweather (that's an old lady who lives in one of his houses) as a *chaperone*. I still thought of that poor old garment, and a little of whether I ought to go; but I did want to, *so* much,—I *did* want to speak to a man

who wasn't old and bookish, or like that hateful young doctor here—and I said I would. So I asked if I might stay away that afternoon and look after my things, and he laughed, and said that old Mr Sunbridge stayed away whenever he wanted, and slept in the little room all through the winter like a bear (or is it a squirrel?), and that I could do the same if I liked. Then I ran off home as hard as I could, and—oh, Ju!—I cried when I got out that frock! But it was too late to retreat then, and besides, I would sooner have gone without any dress at all than have given up my outing. A carriage was sent for me, and I went up in state. I was uncertain whether to go into the drawing-room very early, or just when dinner was announced, but I thought the first was the least formidable, so I crept in about a quarter to eight. There was one man there already,—a great big 'soldier man' as Billy would call him (how is sweet Billy? hug him well for me). It was Sir Simon Hood. I have told you about him before; he is one of Sir John's oldest friends; he is in a cavalry regiment, I believe, and what we should call a great swell. He has immensely long legs, which he is very fond of admiring, and he has a kind, rather red, face. He told me about the shooting that day, and said they hadn't got as much as they ought to have,—though I believe they killed more than seven

hundred pheasants, and any number of rabbits and things. Then he began to talk about the Professor, and then the others came in. Sir John introduced me to two of the other men; one had a nice kind face, and the other, who was very good-looking, stared at me as if I had been the wild girl of the woods. One of them was a lord with a queer name, but I couldn't be sure which,—I hope it was the nice one. Sir John took me in to dinner, and I felt just for a second, as we marched across the great hall, as if we were married and half of everything belonged to me! So there I was with a good deal of my fright gone, wondering who would be on the other side of me. Will you believe it! Mr Kemp actually came hurrying up, and said I really must sit between him and the Professor! Was ever such an unlucky girl! I almost cried out, 'Oh no!' Fancy if I had! Then Sir John laughed, and said he supposed he must give me up, and that learned people ought to be together. How I hated Mr Kemp, but I hated the Professor worse. He was a pretty old and rather fat man, who spoke in such a queer kind of a whisper that I could hardly make out what he said; and he and Mr Kemp talked to one another across me all the time about books, and now and then threw a remark to me just as if I had been a school-girl! There were eight other men besides these two. I forgot to say Mrs

Merryweather had a cold and couldn't come, which made me dreadfully conspicuous. The other men all talked very loud, and laughed a great deal, and ate and drank a great deal too. Sir Simon was just opposite me. I saw him hesitate when some ice was offered to him, and give a little kind of groan as he refused it, and I am sure it was because he felt sorry he couldn't eat any more. However, I think that old Dr Grumper ate and drank as much as any of them, and he hadn't so much excuse as they had, for he had been in the library all the afternoon. He talked to me more towards the end, and I had to put my head quite near him to catch what he said. We must have looked most confidential. Sir Simon was always staring at me; I am sure my seams must have looked quite white in that strong light.

"So at last the immense dinner was over, and I hadn't enjoyed it one bit. When dessert came I didn't know whether to go at once, or wait for a little. However, I soon got up, and then all the men stood up; I felt a little proud then, and tried to sail out of the room as if I had been a great lady! Then, Ju,—have a little patience and I'll soon finish,—I didn't know whether to go to the drawing-room again or not. However, I peeped in, and there was the old housekeeper, who was so horrid to me when I came first, but we are great friends now. I think she had been having

a doze on a sofa. She said coffee would come in a minute, and that the brougham was ordered for me at eleven. It was about ten then. So I wandered about, and looked at the lovely china and pictures with a book in my hand, and whenever I heard any one, I flopped down into the nearest chair. Such pictures! An immense Raeburn,—a lovely girl in a white dress—one of the Casterton people. Several by Sir Joshua, and a Rembrandt, but I hadn't time to look at half, for I was always afraid of being caught spying. At half-past ten no one had come, and I began to feel a little sorry. But soon after they all trooped in, and Sir John came up, and was so pleasant, and said he was so much obliged to me for coming to talk to Dr Grumper. That was horrid again, but worse was to follow. Mr Kemp, whose face was as red as a Reine Marie Henriette, came to me and—pity me!—asked me to go with him and his friend to the library to look at some fusty old books! I *had* to go too. Dr Grumper called me 'a fine girl' when he went away! I do believe I could be Frau Grumper if I wanted! Or perhaps it was the wine that put him in such good humour, and made him squeeze my hand so hard! Then I went off in my brougham, with a footman to let me out. I wasn't sure whether I ought to have given them something for making them come out so late, but of course I hadn't anything with me,

and so I didn't. Should the footman have had it, or the coachman?

"So, Ju, you see how what might have been such a pleasant little outing was spoiled. I am afraid I must be a very bad girl, and that this was a kind of punishment for me. Oh, how I do wish I was rich! and had a beautiful place, and pictures and carriages, and hadn't to wear a dress till it got so threadbare you could see the things beneath it!"

## IV.

"Well," said Mr Kemp, as he and his brother in literature stumped their way home through the park, "we have given one young person a happy night at any rate." His wrinkled old face beamed with satisfaction at the thought.

"So I hear you are in for it now," said Sir Simon to his nearest neighbour in the smoking-room an hour or so afterwards. "I thought you told me the young woman wouldn't have anything to say to you?"

"No more she would then. She said our ways were different, and all that. So I found out what hers were. She was a district visitor, and went into the East End, into Whitechapel way, you know."

"I know,—slumming."

"That sort of a thing. Well, there's nothing like giving way to their foibles when you're courting them, even if they are rather peculiar; so I got Cappadocia to come with me and a couple of detectives, and we made a night of it."

"What kind of a night?" inquired Hood.

"Oh, we went to all sorts of places,—went to a thieves' lodging-house for one thing; there were seven hundred of them in it, and all those that weren't thieves were murderers. So they said, and I can quite believe it from the look of 'em,—you never saw such chaps. Then we went to some places near the Docks, and we saw a poor devil with nothing on but a cask."

"Nothing on but a cask!" said Sir Simon, interested.

"Not a thing. He had come ashore with a lot of money a few days before, and got into the hands of some crimps, and they had drugged him and robbed him, not only of his brass—fifty pounds he said it was—but of his very clothes and boots. And there he was,—in this old bottomless barrel—wandering up and down till he met some Christians. Cappadocia wanted to go and get into the crimp's house and break his neck; but the police said we couldn't do that, and besides we didn't know where he lived. Then we went to a Jews' dancing-place, a club, you know. They

were rather unwilling to let us in at first; there were a good many good-looking Jewesses there,—and we had a fine time of it altogether."

"Did you tell Lady Mary about that?"

"Rather; went off there the first thing. Mary said that that wasn't at all the kind of district-visiting *she* meant, and that she would have to take me herself some day, and then I saw it was all right. She knew I had done what I could to please her. That's the kind of thing they like, my dear Simon, when they see you've taken up with their whims."

"But it might be very awkward sometimes. Some women have such queer fancies that way."

"Well, you've got to humour them, or you won't have a chance."

"Supposing," said Sir Simon, "a young woman had a rage for"—(*books*, he had nearly said, but pulled up just in time)—"gardening; now what would you do then?"

"Just go and garden, of course; wheel an empty barrow about with a spade in it, and nail gooseberry bushes up to the wall with strips of a red flannel petticoat."

"That would be a most infernal nuisance. Suppose it was Ascot week, and you wanted to go?"

"Why, you'd have to want,—that's all. But of

course this is only when one's courting; when one's married, you know, it's different. Marry in the slack time, old chap, and then you'll be all right. Who's your young woman?"

"When *is* the slack time?" asked Hood, ignoring the question. "Well—I'll tell your missus what you've told me, and advise her to insist on a good long courtship."

"Humour their whims!" said Hood to himself as he went up to his room. "It'll be a terrible business, worse than district-visiting, I doubt. But I suppose it must be done."

## V.

Sir Simon had lost his heart yet once again; his poor heart which ought to have been so battered and worn after all it had gone through. He was continually running down to Casterton in the autumn to shoot, and soon after Penelope's engagement he had met her there. On some of his visits he had never seen her; on others, when there had been ladies in the house, she had been asked to lunch or tea. The soldier had at first regarded her with careless eyes. But bit by bit he had discovered something attractive in the maiden, and it was not wonder on his part, or disapprobation of the shabby frock, which made

his glance so often meet hers at the dinner-party. And he had come to look at her (he had as yet had few opportunities for conversation) through the Rector's spectacles, as an earnest and learned young woman, whose bright eyes and merry mouth were traitors when they said that their mistress loved amusement and fun better than dry old books. Hood had in his clumsy way often made the girl the topic of conversation with Mr Kemp, who for one reason or another was almost daily up at Casterton; and if the latter had not been so deeply engrossed in his own affairs, he must have seen that it was more than chance which led up to her so often. But the Rector, sharp enough in many ways, was blind as a mole here. It did not seem in the least strange to him that a cavalry officer, whose tastes had hitherto lain entirely in the direction of field-sports, should suddenly develop a yearning to penetrate into and understand the mysteries which surround book-collecting; and that therefore he should be interested in everything which pertained to the fascinating pursuit, even in a young female librarian. He really thought that Sir Simon was bitten by what he would have scorned to call a mania; and so it came to pass that one fine autumn morning the soldier found himself standing in a crowded London street, looking at a bit of paper on which was written in Mr Kemp's

minute hand the address of a bookseller, and trying to remember some of the advice which had accompanied it, and the strange words which had been used.

Before entering the shop he examined the windows. One was full of huge folios,—atlas, elephant, megatherium folios. They were for the most part magnificently bound, and the inscriptions on their backs might as well have been written in Hebrew for any information they gave to their present viewer. As a contrast, a foil as it were, a few modern low-priced books stood in another corner. But there was nothing outside to occupy Hood's attention long, so he opened the door and went in.

"I want the book on Bibliofolia."

"About *what*, sir?" asked the man in charge.

"About Bibliofoliology," said Hood, thinking he must have made some mistake in the arrangement of the letters.

"I'm afraid we haven't got such a work," said the man, after thinking a little. "You don't mean Bibliography?"

"That's not it, but it may do," said Hood carelessly, as if he would be able to extract what he wanted out of any book.

"Or Bibliomania perhaps?"

"That's it,—that's just what I want; let me have it, please?"

"What particular one do you want?" asked the bookseller.

"I'll take them all," replied the man of war.

"Perhaps you will kindly step this way," said the attendant, wondering if the purchaser whom he had often met in dreams had actually appeared in real life. "These," pointing to a long row of shelves, "are all connected with the subject."

Sir Simon stared in surprise at the dense array. "I couldn't possibly buy all that lot," he said in a tone of remonstrance: "why, they would half fill a house!"

"No, sir," said the anxious shopkeeper; "but you will be able to make a fine selection; and you couldn't have come at a better time; we have just got in our purchases from the celebrated Wetterhorn collection."

"Oh, have you," said the Baronet; "that's very fortunate."

"Yes, and some of them are extremely rare. I dare say you would like to begin with this copy of Dibdin?"

"I think I should," replied Hood, rather glad he remembered a song of his.

"Well, this is a splendid set of the whole works, it is a large-paper copy, uncut, and, if not absolutely unique, most extremely rare."

"Which is the one with the songs in it?" inquired Hood, staring at the mighty volumes.

"Songs!" repeated the man. "I don't think he wrote any songs, sir."

"Oh yes, he did, lots of them; I've heard them sung myself, scores of times. There's Tom Bowling, you know, and Sally——"

We have often thought that the assistant bookseller in that establishment would have made a fine actor if he had taken to the stage early in life; he listened to his customer with a perfectly unmoved countenance.

"I think, sir, you'll find that *that* gentleman was another gentleman. I could get you a copy of *his* works, after we have done here."

"Oh, I dare say I did confuse the names. Well, how much is that lot there?" A set of the learned Doctor's works of this calibre is by no means to be had for nothing, and Hood opened his eyes wide at the sum named. "How much?" he cried.

"You see, sir," said the other, speaking very rapidly and with great earnestness, "it's not once in twenty years that a chance of this kind turns up; if that set was sold you might search all the kingdom through and not find another. I don't suppose, if you take it away with you, that I could find another in ten years, not if Lord Rosebery himself was to want it!"

"The devil you couldn't!" said the baronet, thinking it would be foolish of him to lose such an

opportunity. "Then I suppose I had better have it. But I had no idea it would be so much."

"Books of this kind," said the man, replacing the one volume which had been taken out, "have to be looked at differently from ordinary copies. They are an investment, better than most investments. Mr Wetterhorn bought that set in 1848 for thirty guineas, and see what it has risen to since! But it will be no good filling your shelves with a lot of rubbish you will never read or refer to. What you want are just a few good standard works which it will always be a pleasure to you to have."

"Just so," said Hood.

"Of course in fine condition. Now here's a nice copy of Lowndes; a cheap set this, though it is a large-paper one. We can put it in at fifteen guineas."

"I say,—you know——" began the Dragoon.

"Of course, as you are well aware, Lowndes is indispensable to an amateur. He gives the prices of all books, of all books worth mentioning. Can you think, sir, of any work the value of which you would like to know?"

"I think you might look *him* out then," said Hood, poking his cane into the middle of the shelf where the relation of the poet had his habitation.

"Oh, certainly!" said the assistant, a good deal

taken aback; "certainly, certainly, certainly!" rummaging through the leaves of the first volume he happened to get hold of. "But, as you know, we must take what he says about Dibdin with some salt. Lowndes, sir, disapproved of Dibdin's principles, and showed it by knocking something off the prices of his books in the catalogue. And besides, he is rather out of date."

Hood had a fine opening here, if he had seen it; but he did not, and the seller went on. "Now," said he, putting the two names down as a memorandum, "you want a good authority on a different class of books. Here's Brunet,—you couldn't have a better one — Brunet, twelve volumes, uncut, £20."

"Haven't you got him at less than that?" asked Sir Simon, somewhat staggered at the magnitude of these demands on his purse.

"We *could* let you have a cheaper set," said the man, laying some stress on the second word, "but you wouldn't thank us in the long-run. If you have one set in large paper have them all so; and then, when you have a sale, you get all their value back, and more."

"Oh, do you!" said Hood, a little cheered at this idea.

"You want now," the seller continued, "this Renouard, three guineas—this fine copy!"

The Baronet looked at it doubtfully. "I really think I hardly want it," he said.

"How will you be able to make out the value of your Aldines without his help?" asked the man.

"Well, there's something in that," agreed the sufferer. "All right, in with him. And now I have enough."

"When you have this Italian treatise——"

"N—no, I don't think I want that."

"A short one; to enable you to distinguish the earlier examples of the Italian presses. A short one, sir."

"Quite a short one, eh?"

"Very short, sir, and very cheap; only fifty shillings."

Then Hood escaped. But the indefatigable assistant had one more shot at him when passing a certain row of shelves. "Are you quite sure you are wise, sir, in leaving this set?"

"What is it?" demanded the Bibliomaniac faintly.

"It's the 'Bibliothek des Literarischen'——"

"Is there much of it?"

"Ninety-six volumes; but——"

"No, no!" cried the worm, turning at last. "Ninety-six,—what the devil should I do with ninety-six volumes in German when I can't read a single word of it! I tell you I won't look at

another book to-day. You had better put them up, and I'll have a hansom. You won't mind a cheque?" The man was sure they would not, but he went to see his employer, who had just come in. And that great authority, having had extensive dealings with Sir Simon's grandfather, was very pleased to make the acquaintance of his successor.

So Hood wrote a cheque for,—well, let that be a secret between himself and his banker. The indefatigable assistant, who had not been long in the shop, expected his master to be somewhat overpowered by the magnitude of the transaction in which he had been the agent; but the latter, being accustomed to deal in thousands and even tens of thousands of pounds, maintained his calmness. "I am very pleased to see you here, Sir Simon, I can assure you. The late Sir James was a good customer of mine."

"I suppose so," said Hood. "He had a terrible lot of books."

"I see you have made an interesting collection," said the great man, glancing at the list in his hand. "That's a fine set, that Dibdin."

"Yes," said Hood; "I thought it best to get a big copy of him, you know, and then it will fetch a better price at one's sale."

"You must have a fine library by this time?"

"Well, curiously enough the old boy left it

away from me; I got everything *but* the books. Fact was I hadn't developed the taste for them I have now, so I suppose he thought I wouldn't have cared for them. But I've taken to them amazingly lately, never so happy as when I'm reading."

"Well, you will excuse me," said the chief. "There is a sale at Sotheby's, and my time is nearly up. Take a seat, Sir Simon, while they pack the books. Here's the last catalogue on Syrian ethnological rarities which you will find very interesting."

"Thank you, thank you," said Hood, taking the proffered pamphlet with some reluctance. "Much obliged to you; I *will* sit down. But I find this kind of print rather trying to the eyes when one does too much of it. I think I'll just have a look at the papers; you don't happen to have a 'Sportsman' about, do you?"

After a bit the packer came in. "The cabman says he can't take your box, sir," he said. "The top of his cab is not meant for heavy luggage, and he's afraid of it breaking through."

"Put it in a growler then," said Hood, "and I'll follow."

"It's the Dibdin that makes up the weight so much," explained the man.

"I thought he looked pretty heavy," replied Hood, and off he went with his treasures.

VI.

The Dragoon, when he was once more safe in his quarters, refused two invitations to dinner, and spent the time so gained in studying his purchases. At the end of two days' cramming he began to confuse a Collation with an Incunabula. "By Jove!" he said, examining his face in a glass with some anxiety. "Why, I'm looking quite haggard! I shall be as grey as a jackdaw in another week. I really mustn't let this infernal thirst for learning do me any harm. I think I'll take a run down to those steeplechases after all, and have a day off."

"Holloa! what are you up to now?" said a brother officer coming suddenly into Hood's room the day after his return from the steeplechase, and finding him sitting in an easy-chair, with a big book on his knee contemplating nothing.

"Oh, it is you, Brotherton! I say, look here, fancy a man giving £2260 for a Boccaccio!"

"It's a stiffish figure," replied the Major; "but if she comes of a good sort he might do worse. A Diebidale filly, ain't it?"

"Diebidale grandmother, you old thickhead; you're always thinking about horses. It's a book, man!"

"A book! What—two thousand guineas for a book!"

"Yes, old Boccaccio; he wasn't a woman either. Bound in faded yellow morocco." And then Hood began to read the account of the dinner party which the Duke of Roxburghe gave to Lords Sunderland and Oxford, and its results.

"What sort of stuff is that?" asked the Major, after waiting a minute in the hope of something interesting turning up. "Let's look at him." He examined the great volume with a distrustful and prejudiced air. "This seems poor kind of fun," he said. "What's the joke of it?"

"Joke! Why, it isn't a comic book. He's a great authority, old Dibdin; he was Lord Spencer's librarian, you know, and knew all about books."

"Did he write all that?" inquired the Major.

"Yes, and a heap more too. Look at that row," and Hood with some pride pulled aside a curtain which hung before the voluminous efforts of the learned Doctor."

"Lord bless my soul!" said the Major, staring at them.

"Big paper, you see," explained Hood.

"Very big," said the Major, having another stare. "Weigh half a stone each, I should think."

"I mean in the margin, you know; lots of room there, you see."

"Lots; what are you going to do with it?"

"Oh, nothing particular; but it adds to their value, makes a lot of difference. Books without margins are only worth half the money."

"What's the reason of that?"

"Well, I can't exactly say,—fashion, I suppose; you can write notes on them, you see, much better when they're broad."

"What kind of notes?" demanded the persevering one, beginning to think his old friend was not quite as he ought to be.

"Oh, all kinds of interesting things. Look here,—I made one myself." And, with a pride that was touching rather than arrogant, Hood turned over the leaves till he came to it. It was not difficult to find the page; it was well creased, and there, in huge sprawling inky letters,—the sight of which in such a work would most assuredly have thrown Mr Kemp into a fit,—was recorded the last price fetched by the Boccaccio.

The Major stared at the note, and then at its author, and then at the note again. "Look here, old man," he said at last, "come along with me to the club and drop this kind of thing, or we'll be having a Commission of Lunacy coming to sit on you. I hope to goodness it won't get about in the regiment that you've taken to reading books,

—and making notes in them! Get the infernal things away somehow, and I give you my honour I'll never say a word of what I caught you doing."

"Commission of lunacy, you old codfish!" cried the indignant owner of the treasures. "Get them away! You're a drivelling old idiot yourself. Why, I gave more than a hundred pounds for them!"

Then Major Brotherton went off in search of the Doctor. "You had better have a good look at Hood to-night," said he. "I've not been quite comfortable about him lately, and I went in this afternoon to see what he was doing."

"And what was he doing?" inquired the Doctor.

"Reading," replied the Major. "Mind you, I shouldn't say so much about *that*, by itself, though it ain't what one would expect to find Hood doing at three in the afternoon. But it was the book."

"A very bad one, eh?" asked the Doctor. "You get hold of it for me, and I'll just run my eye over it, and tell you what I think."

So the other, running considerable risk of detection, managed the theft, and secured the volume, or one like it, and at midnight the Medico arrived back with it and a somewhat disappointed face.

"It's a queer kind of book," quoth he; "as you say, not the kind of thing a man like Hood should

read. It ain't quite as immoral as I thought it would be from your description, but it's written in such a queer lingo that I'm half afraid it may be all the more dangerous. Vice concealed, you know, is a terrible business. Far better out with it, like de Kock and the other chaps. But I'll keep my eye on him, depend on that, and if I notice anything bad I'll let you know at once."

"Do so, do so," said the Major with some emotion. "It's a terrible thing to see a fellow like old Simon going wrong."

"Not a better shot in the regiment!"

"Or a better rider, for his weight!"

"And as rich as Crœsus!"

"Yes, that's the worst of it, or he wouldn't be able to buy books of this kind; why, he gave a hundred pounds for that one!"

"You don't tell me so!" cried the Doctor, almost tumbling off his chair. "A hundred pounds!—there *must* be more in it than I've noticed. I think I had better take it back, and make another examination."

## VII.

Partly owing to the remonstrances of his friends, but chiefly owing to his own feelings, Sir Simon got to hate the sight of those dearly-purchased

volumes, and began to think he must take advice and get rid of them somehow. Happiness might after all be purchased too dearly. Very likely Penelope would have nothing to say to him after all his slaving. She would scorn his feeble efforts to follow in her steps, and, dismissing him, turn without another thought to the abstract treatise she happened to be engaged in. Besides, he could not yet quite make up his mind to give her a chance of rejecting him. He knew little or nothing about her, and his affection might pass away in due course as other affections had done before. But it showed no signs of doing so yet; in the morning, and in the evening, and between whiles, there was continually rising up before him the image of the young mistress of the old library.

What was he to do with these most infernal books? So long as they stood in his room he felt he had no business to go away to shoot, or hunt, or even to dine. Give them to the regimental library? The regimental library, after all it had heard about them, would have scorned to touch them. To the British Museum? To the Sailors' Home he had heard about in Whitechapel? Why not give them to Sir John? Or, happier and better thought, why not give them to Miss Shaw, and then have done with the whole business, both as concerned them and as concerned her?

Whether she would take their owner or not she would be glad enough to take *them*, if they could be presented in a sufficiently delicate manner. In that lay the difficulty. However, Hood got an immense box, and packed them carefully in it (he was ashamed to ask his servant to do it), and then waited till the next shoot came off at Casterton, to which he had been bidden. And to Casterton, when the summons came, he departed.

"Sir Simon has brought plenty of cartridges this time," said the head-keeper as he surveyed the great case in the gun-room, where it had been taken with the other shooting paraphernalia.

"Those ain't cartridges," said the new-comer's servant, who had heard his master hammering, and noticed the gaps in the shelves. "They're books."

"Books!" exclaimed the keeper. "What does he want with books here?"

"Goodness knows," said the other, shaking his head; "I don't. I doubt there's something wrong with Sir Simon."

It happened that on this visit a married sister of Sir John's presided over indoor affairs, who was glad to have Penelope in the drawing-room sometimes to talk to, and so Hood saw a little more of her than usual. He met her now and then in parts of the house which she had never entered before;

and once or twice when, shooting near home they came into lunch, he found her in the dining-room. The little he saw added some fuel to the fire which he found was still burning within him with a strong but uncertain flame. But somehow or other he could never find an opportunity for the presentation.

Then the last day's sport arrived; the last cartridge was fired, guns were packed, servants tipped, and six men were off to town by a morning train. Sir Simon said he would stay till the evening. Sir John was down at the office with his agent; his sister was comfortably reading the 'Morning Post' in her boudoir. Now was the time for action.

Hood made up a little speech as he walked down the long corridor which led to the library. Penelope was sitting over the fire, engaged in some feminine work in worsteds, and she looked rather guilty at being caught idling.

"Miss Shaw," began the soldier, "I wish you'd let me make you a small present,—a return for nearly shooting you, you know, the other day when you were going home."

Penelope looked, as she felt, much astonished, and did not know at all what to say. "It's very kind of you," at last she said.

"Oh no, not at all. I've always felt I was in your debt for frightening you so much. And now

I've got some things I know you'll appreciate, if you'll only accept them."

"I really wasn't frightened," said the girl, picking out a bright yellow thread for the eyes of the owl she was fashioning.

"I'm sure you must have been. Many gir—many ladies wouldn't appreciate them, but I know you will. I can quite understand your feelings, too, though I began rather late; it's wonderful how it grows on one. I'll go and fetch them." So he departed, leaving Penelope in a state of marvelling curiosity. What could he be going to give her? How very queer it all was. Presently she heard a heavy tread outside and a great bump against the door. It opened, and in came Sir Simon with a very red face, staggering, mighty man though he was, under the weight of his enormous box. "There!" he exclaimed, setting it down in a way that made all the furniture in the room rattle.

All ideas of a bracelet or a ring, if ever such had entered Penelope's mind,—all ideas of *anything* faded away as she surveyed the box. It looked rather like one of those "kists" in which flitting servants carry their possessions. It might have held the supply of linen necessary for a considerable household.

Hood proudly threw back the lid. "Now then!" he exclaimed, with an air of triumph,

taking out one of the Dibdins, "here's a set of books that you can't get in all London, if you died for it!" Penelope bent low over her owl to hide her face, and she began to put a scarlet eye into the wise bird's head.

"Ah!" said Hood, blowing at the opened page (he had seen Mr Kemp blow the dust off the top edges). "It's not often one gets a chance of looking at a book like *this!* So wide! So long! So deep. So—" here his vocabulary failed him. Penelope now discovered her mistake, and began to pick out the yellow eye which was rightly in. "You don't know, Miss Shaw, what this book tells you; all the prices of all the books in the world! At least, that's not in this one, but in the other lot," squinting into the box. "All the books in the world! And there are seven more volumes as big as this! And ten nearly as big! And seven——"

"Oh, I *hate* them!" cried Penelope, dropping her owl, her scissors, and her carefully assorted wools. "I can't understand a word about them! What does it matter if you can't read them whether they are long or short! I just *hate* and *detest* the whole lot!"

"What!" cried Sir Simon, hardly believing his ears.

"Oh, Sir Simon!" cried the girl. "If you had only been driven *mad* with them as I have been!

Watching people lest they should take them away when they come to look at them! And writing answers to stupid people who asked about them! And carrying them about, as if they were babies, to be looked at! Oh, I am going to give them up—I am going away—I can't stand them any more!"

"Going away! Where to?" demanded Hood.

"To a nunnery!" cried the girl in desperation. And they stared at one another.

"So you really *do* hate them?" he asked at length.

"I can't help it," said Penelope, with something of entreaty now in her voice, as she picked up her work again.

"And so do I!" shouted the Baronet, tossing the heavy volume recklessly back into the box. "I detest the very sight of them! When I think of the years I've wasted——"

"Years!" exclaimed Penelope with large eyes of astonishment.

"Well, perhaps weeks; oh, of course, if you're so very accurate—well—days then,—when I think of the time I've wasted over them when I might have been hunting or shooting, I feel quite—quite——"

"Ashamed," suggested Penelope.

"Ashamed. But I'll never do it again. Well, there's the end of *that!* And I thought you'd

be so pleased with them! I got them for you!"

"Oh, Sir Simon!"

"I did really. I didn't mean to give you them,—but to work up the subject. And now I must find you something else." Penelope went on with her work; the owl's countenance was assuming a most extraordinary appearance, for the red eye had extended almost up to the ears. "What can I give you? You really couldn't call that boxful a set-off for the fright I gave you?"

"No, I really couldn't," replied Penelope.

"What would you like?"

"I think I want a new pair of scissors," said the girl.

"Let me see," said Hood. He took the work from her as well, and examined it. "Well, I never saw such a creature in all my life!"

"I don't know what owls' eyes are like," said the girl. "What colour are they?"

"I couldn't tell you. But then I couldn't tell you what any one's eyes are like. What colour are mine?" They stared at each other again.

"I'm not quite sure," said Penelope. "I think they're a kind of——yellow."

"Oh no—they aren't yellow,—look again."

"Well then,—they're green."

"They are not,—they are grey,—so are yours." A queer kind of feeling began now to creep over

the Dragoon, half pleasant and half frightening, and a small voice seemed to say within him, "Simon Hood, if you want to get out of this room a free man, get out now." "Will you let me give you a ring?" he said. "Let me see your hand." One solitary little ring adorned one finger; he tried to pull it off, but it stuck, and required a good deal of pushing, first one way and then another. "You are done for now," the small voice seemed to say; "no use struggling any longer!"

"I want more than the ring," cried the man. "I want you!" and whether his face, or hers, or the owl's eye, was the reddest at that moment, it would have puzzled the President of the Royal Academy to say.

# SAMELA.

## A TRAGEDY IN THE LIFE OF A BOOK-HUNTER.

### I.

A SCORE or more of years ago—the date is of no importance or the exact place—an Englishman wandered down to the north of Scotland and invested some of his superfluous capital in a salmon river. Such an adventurer is often but poorly repaid for his enterprise. He generally finds that the water, which was low on his arrival, becomes lower during his first week, while for the remainder of his stay it is merely sufficient to keep the bed of the stream moist, and give the grouse something to drink. Or there is too much water; the river is running too big, and the fish make their way to quieter stretches above. And it now and then happens, when everything else seems right, that the fish are not up, or, if up, are able to find more profitable occupation for their

*Samela.*

From a drawing by STANLEY CURSITER.

spare time than taking artificial flies. In such wise the honest angler often makes his complaint. But this wanderer was more fortunate. During his month it rained a little almost every night, while two out of the three Sundays had been regular specimens of Scotch downpours. It was very soothing, when lying awake at night, to listen to the drip of water on the roof, or the gurgle of a choked-up pipe in the yard—a lullaby to a fisherman on the dry north-east coast. On Sundays, too, clad in rain-proof garments, it was pleasant to splash across the hill to the little church, and listen to the minister holding forth to his small congregation of keepers and shepherds, translating as he went passages from the psalms and lessons for the benefit of his southern hearer.

This paper is not a treatise on salmon-fishing, or it would be a pleasant task to give a minute and detailed account of the good sport which this Englishman—Mr John Gibbs—enjoyed; to describe with accurate pen the skill with which he chose the temptations he offered to the fish, and the courage and coolness he displayed in the struggles which ensued. There is, however, something monotonous in continuous success, and it is just possible that the reader, after devouring with avidity the description of the first twenty or thirty battles, might then become a little

wearied, a little sated, and wish for a blank day.

Gibbs ate salmon till he hated the sight of it, and he sent fish away to his friends to an extent which almost made the landlord think that the next dividend of the Highland Railway would be affected; four, five, six,—even eight fish in a day. "What slaughter!" some would say, who perhaps get their supplies by nets. But his honest soul was never vexed by such a thought. He knew over how many blank days that white month should rightly be spread to get a fair average, and he abated not a whit of his skill, or let off one single fish if he could help it.

The recipient of one of these salmon—a friend in the south—was the innocent cause of the adventure which shortly after befell Gibbs. After thanking him for the fish the letter went on to say: "I see by the 'Courier' that there is to be a sale at Strathamat, so I suppose that the old laird is dead. He was very kind to me years ago when I had your water, and used often to give me a day on his pools, which were very good. He had some wonderful books, and as you are fond of such things you should go over and have a look at them. He said they were worth a lot of money. There was one—of Shakespeare's—Hamlet, or the Merry Wives, or one of those, which he used to sit and look at as if it was alive. I thought

it was an inferior old article myself, but then perhaps I wasn't a very good judge."

Our fisherman was very fond of books, though so far as the great science of Bibliomania went he was uneducated; a man who knew ever so much less about such matters than Mr Quaritch might know a very great deal more than he did. But there must have been something of the blood of the old collectors in his veins. He could at any time spend a pleasant morning in poking about a second-hand bookseller's shop, and regarded with indifference the dust which settled on him in the course of his examinations. He loved the touch and feel of books, their backs and sides and edges, even the smell which hangs about the more ancient, seldom-opened specimens. A catalogue had a charm for him which he would not have found it very easy to give a reason for,—certainly not one which would have satisfied any of his friends, for the most part of the pure sportsman breed, who would have as soon occupied their time in reading a grocer's or an ironmonger's list as a second-hand bookseller's. Gibbs did not parade his little weakness before these friends; he found them unsympathetic, with souls above the arrangement of type and the width of margins. A large-paper copy, or one with the headlines and the edges mercilessly cropped, was to them a book and nothing more; they cared nothing

for the work of the old printers, and you might call over the names of all the famous binders without arousing any enthusiasm in their minds.

"Hamlet, or the Merry Wives of Windsor, or one of those!"—what possibilities were opened up by these random words! Gibbs knew that the sale was to take place the next day, for his gillie (who was on the eve of being married) wished to attend it, to pick up something for his house, and another man had been engaged to take his place. Now the Englishman resolved not to fish at all but to go also himself.

The sale was advertised to begin at twelve, but it was well before that time when the intending purchasers were deposited at the scene of action, but a short time ago the home of the head of one of the most ancient clans in Scotland. Strathamat, as he was universally called, had been an embarrassed man. He had never been able to take in the world the position which was certainly his by birth. His wife had long been dead, he had no children, and for years he had led almost the life of a hermit, seeing few people except his bailiff and house servants. Then he died, and a great concourse of people came together from far and wide to attend him to his grave. He had been poor and little known and of little power in the world; but he was the chief of a great

clan, and hundreds of men of his blood came together to do him empty honour.

The house had the usual desolate appearance which houses have at such times. People were going in and out, poking and measuring furniture, and laughing and joking as if a sale was the best fun in the world. The lawn in front of the house was littered with odds and ends; it seemed as if the rubbish of half the county had been collected there that day. Gibbs went into the principal sitting-room, a dingy faded place; some of the bedroom furniture had been brought in to sell there, and half filled it up; the carpet was rolled up in a corner, and near the door the chocolate-coloured paper was hanging on the walls, where careless people had banged it when bringing things in. There had probably not been a fire in the room for weeks, and the air was heavy and mildewy. But Gibbs had no thought for furniture or colour, or even smells that day. Up against one side of the room was a long low bookcase, and as he walked across to it his heart began to jump a little at the possibilities which lay therein.

The collection was quite a small one. Perhaps there were two or three hundred books in the room, the majority of which were unspeakably uninteresting. There were many old works on agri-

culture, a great number of theological treatises, Hume and Smollett's Histories, a broken set of Rees' Encyclopædia, and a common edition of the earlier poets; the bulk of the shelves were filled up with material such as this. But here and there in the last shelf examined were some books of quite a different kind, shining out from among their worthless companions as gold-dust does in sand. It was plain that while the majority had stood their ground there for many years—perhaps ever since they were bought by their first owner—the few had been well cared for, and had not till quite recently been in the bookcase at all. Some one, looking through the old man's effects, had found them in a drawer or cupboard, and had stuck them at random into the nearest shelf where there was room. There were several books illustrated by Rowlandson, the Three Tours of Dr Syntax, the 'Cries of London,' a fine copy of Goldsmith's 'Vicar of Wakefield.' Some of Cruikshank's rarest works were there; the first edition of 'German Popular Stories,'—what a dealer would call a spotless copy, in the original boards, as fresh and crisp as if it had just been sent out from the publisher's office. There was his 'Hans in Iceland' with its strange wild etchings, his 'Life in Paris,' a large-paper edition in the salmon-coloured wrappers just as it was issued. Interested and excited as Gibbs would have been

at these discoveries at any other time, he had no thought now but for the quarto. It was not among the illustrated books, and he searched again below among the larger volumes in the bottom shelf. There stood Penn's 'Quakers,' as it had stood for perhaps a hundred years, defying dust and damp and draughts in its massive binding. There were old French and Spanish dictionaries, a good edition of Tacitus in several volumes, the genuine works of Josephus, and Gerarde's 'Herbal.' What was this dingy calf-covered thing lying on the top of the rest, more in folio than in quarto size? Gibbs drew it out, and when he had opened it he gave a kind of gasp, and looked round to the door to see if he was alone. The quarto was merely loosely stitched into the calf-binding which had evidently been made for a larger book; it had been kept with the greatest care, and seemed without a flaw or blemish; it was quite untouched by the knife, and some leaves at the end were still unopened,—left so probably to show the perfect virginity of its state. It was not the 'History of the Merry Wives which lay imbedded in its pages, nor yet that of the Danish Prince, but—*A Pleasant and Conceited Comedie called Loues Labors Lost. As it was presented before her Highness this last Christmas. Newly corrected and augmented by W. Shakespere.*

It was manifest to Gibbs that those who had the management of the sale knew nothing of the value of this book or of the few other treasures in the room; they were all to be placed on the same footing as Josephus, or Dickinson's Agriculture, and sold for what they would fetch. He had been hoping and trusting that this would be the case ever since he heard of the quarto, but now, when his wishes were fulfilled, and he found himself, so far as could be seen, the master of the situation, certain qualms began to pass over his mind. The casuistical question of what was the right thing to do troubled him a little. If he had come across the quarto on a stall and the bookseller in charge—presumably a man who knew at least the elements of his trade—had asked a ridiculously small small price for it,—well, Gibbs would not have thought it necessary to enlighten another man as to his business; he would have pocketed the volume and gone home with it rejoicing. But if on a casual call on a poor and infirm widow he had espied it lying on a shelf, and gathered that if he gave the owner half a sovereign, he would not only rejoice her heart but be held up to the neighbours as a man who had done a kind and generous deed for the sake of the poor, the question would have presented itself in a much more difficult light. Gibbs hoped in this case that he would have the courage to tell the old lady that her

book was a great deal more valuable than she imagined, and that he would give her at any rate a fair proportion of what it was worth. But here was quite a different affair. The old laird had left no family; his property went to a distant relation whom he had cared little about; he of course must have known the value of his treasures, but he had left no will, no paper saying how they were to be disposed of. Could it be possible (thought Gibbs with a shudder which ran all through him) that it was his bounden duty to go to the manager of the sale and say, "Here is a priceless edition of Shakespeare, of whose value you are evidently ignorant; it is worth £200, £300, for aught I know, £500; it is absolutely unique. Take it to Sotheby's,—and let my reward be the consciousness that I have put a large sum of money into the pocket of a perfect stranger." If this were so, then Gibbs felt that on this occasion he would not do his duty; he was so sure that the attempt would be a failure that it seemed to him better not to make it, and he could moreover always make the graceful speech and hand the book over after the sale. So he put the quarto carefully back and went off in search of the auctioneer. As he left the room a thrill of virtuous self-satisfaction suddenly came over him, which went far towards allaying the qualms he had felt before. He might have put the Grimms

into one pocket, and 'Hans of Iceland' into the other, and buttoned the quarto under his coat, and it was ninety-nine to a hundred that no one would be the wiser or feel the poorer. And he knew that some men would have done this without thinking twice about it, and in some queer way or other have soothed their consciences for the wicked act. It was with a swelling heart that Gibbs thought of his trustworthiness and honesty. But lest there should be others about with hands not so much under control as his, he resolved to take up his quarters in the room, or at any rate never be very far from it, so as to be in a position to counteract possible felonies.

The auctioneer was a stout moon-faced man, with no doubt a fair knowledge of cattle and sheep and the cheaper kinds of furniture. His resonant voice could be heard all over the house: "For this fine mahogany table—the best in the sale—with cover and extra leaves complete—will dine twelve people,—thirty shillings, thirty-five shillings, thirty-seven and six! Who says the twa nots?" And when he had coaxed the "twa nots" out of the reluctant pocket of the Free Church minister he quite unblushingly produced another table superior to the first, which was bought by the doctor for five shillings less, and was the means of causing a slight coolness between the two worthy men for a week or two.

There are few more dreary ways of spending a day than in attending a sale of furniture when you don't want to buy any.

At last the books were reached. The bedsteads, the chairs, the kitchen things, the bits of carpet on the stairs and landing, were all disposed of, and the auctioneer seated himself on a table in front of the shelves, while his assistant handed him a great parcel just as they had stood in line. Gibbs had satisfied himself that everything that was of any value to him was in the furthest corner of one of the lowest shelves; but now at the last moment a fear crept over him that his examination had been too casual and hurried, that lurking in some cover, or bound up perhaps in some worthless volume, there might be something too good to risk the loss of. Some books too had been taken out by the country people, and might not have been put back in the same places. So he decided that for his future peace of mind it was necessary to buy the whole assortment.

It is related in the account of the ever memorable sale of the Valdarfer Boccaccio that "the honour of firing the first shot was due to a gentleman of Shropshire . . . who seemed to recoil from the reverberation of the report himself had made." No such feeling seemed to possess the mind of the individual who first lifted up his voice in that room. He was a short, stout, red-faced man,

the "merchant" of the "toun," as the half-dozen houses in the neighbourhood were called, and being also the postmaster and the registrar for the district, he had something of a literary reputation to keep up. In a measured and determined voice he started the bidding. "I'll gie ye—ninepence," and then he glared all round the room as if to say, "Let him overtop that who dares!" "A shilling," said Gibbs. "And—threepence," retorted the merchant, turning with rather an injured face to have a good look at his opponent. "Half-a-crown," went on Gibbs,—how he longed to shout out, "Twenty pounds for the lot!" But he feared to do anything which would make the audience, and still more the auctioneer, suspicious. This hundred per cent of an advance secured him the first lot, and the young clerk pushed over to him a collection which a hurried examination showed to be three odd numbers of the 'Annual Register,' two volumes of 'Chambers's Miscellany,' and the third volume of 'The Fairchild Family.'

The second lot were by this time laid on the table; there seemed to be something more of the Register in it, and a dull green octavo gave some promise of a continuation of Mrs Sherwood's excellent romance. The postmaster again began the fray with the same offer as before. "I'll not bid for that trash," said Gibbs to himself, and it

seemed as if the government official was to have his way this time. But just as the auctioneer's pencil, which he used as a hammer, was falling, Gibbs was seized with a sudden fright at the bare possibility of something valuable being concealed somewhere in the unpromising heap. "Half a crown!" he called out in a great hurry, and the spoil was again his own. His surmise as to the Register was correct, but the green covers enclosed the 'History of Little Henry and his Bearer'—a work also by the amiable Mrs Sherwood. When the next lot of books were put up the postmaster wheeled round and faced Gibbs, deserting the auctioneer; and as our friend saw that various neighbours were poking his opponent and whispering encouragement to him, he anticipated that the fight was to become warmer as it grew older.

"Ninepence," said the local champion, fixing a stern eye on Gibbs. "Five shillings!" replied the latter, thinking to choke him off. "Six!" cried the merchant, the word escaping him almost before he knew what he was about. "Ten!" called out Gibbs. Then there was a pause. It was evidently the wish of the audience that their representative should carry off the prize this time, and show the haughty stranger that he could not have it all his own way—that they too, even in Ross-shire, knew something of the value of books. All those who were near

enough to Mr MacFadyen, the postmaster, to nudge him and whisper encouragement to him, did so. With a frowning meditative face the old warrior, trying to keep one eye on Gibbs and the other on the auctioneer, and squinting frightfully in consequence, stood, revolving no doubt many things in his blameless mind. "And —threepence!" he gasped out at last, and there went a "sough" through the assembly, and some almost held their breath for a time, so awed were they at his persistence, and at the magnitude of his offer. Gibbs, staring at the dusty heap, thought he would risk the loss of it,—a more hopeless-looking collection he had never seen. And it was perhaps advisable to let this old man have something, or he might grow desperate when desperation would be dangerous. So he smiled a bland refusal to the auctioneer, and that worthy, after trying in vain for about five minutes to get another threepence of an advance, had to let the heap go. The postmaster was at once surrounded by an eager circle of friends, and each book was carefully examined and criticised. They were for the most part old sermons, but an odd volume of Molière having got by chance in among them was at once pounced upon, and Gibbs could hardly keep from laughing outright at the reverence with which it was treated. "It's Latin!" whispered one. "Ay, or Greek!" suggested another. "If

it's no Gaelic!" interposed a snuffy-faced old shepherd, who had arrived very early in the day with three dogs, and had examined and criticised everything in the house without the faintest intention of spending a farthing.

"Here is an elegant work," said the auctioneer, after he had allowed a long interval to give time for the inspection of the Gaelic treasure; "an elegant work by William Shakespeare"—Gibbs looked sharply up—"adorned with cuts—most suitable, with other beautiful and interesting volumes. Shall I say ten shillings again?" But no, he need not—at any rate no one would corroborate him, and the whole collection became the property of John Gibbs for the sum of one shilling. And so it went on—sometimes there was competition, sometimes not; the postmaster was inclined to rest on his laurels, and nearly every lot was knocked down to the Englishman. They worked along the shelves and at last reached the Cruikshanks. But by these happy country folk the drawings of the great artist were set on a level with those in the 'Penny Encyclopædia'; the Grimms attracted no attention; a little more respect was paid to the 'Thrift' and the 'Life of Napoleon' owing to the gaudy colouring, but yet Gibbs became the possessor of them for a few shillings, uncut spotless copies as they were. Then they had to work along the last bottom

shelf, but here, as the books were mostly folios and quartos, and fat to boot, they were got quickly through. Gibbs let go Penn's 'Quakers,' for he could read the title, and a Latin dictionary, and some old theological works. When the quarto on which his eyes had been glued so long was reached, his heart was beating so he felt afraid his neighbour would hear it. "'Love's Labor's Lost,'" slowly spelt out the auctioneer, "a Comedy by William Shakespeare; a most"—he was at a loss for a suitable adjective, and fell back on the old one—"a most—elegant work—by William Shakespeare."

Then there was a pause and a hush. Perhaps the people were tired; the excitement of the sale was over,—for them. But to one man present there it almost seemed as if the quiet which fell for a little while over the crowd in that shabby room was due to something more than this, was in some way an act of homage paid unconsciously and involuntarily to the greatest of all the sons of men. It seemed a profanation to offer for that book the fraction of a shilling or a pound. It was the last, and before the merchant could get out his offer, Gibbs made it his own and electrified the room. "Five pounds!" he cried out in so loud a voice that his next neighbour—a meek old woman in a mutch—jumped as if a snake had bitten her. Some question as to the perfect sanity

of the fisherman had found place in the minds of the wiser and more experienced people in the room as they listened to his rash offers, and thought of the perfect impossibility of any one wanting to have so many books all at the same time. But all doubts were now dispelled, and three good-looking girls who had edged up close to Gibbs to have a quiet examination of him now shrunk away in obvious alarm. The moon-faced auctioneer was visibly affected,—during his long experience he had never seen a book sold for the fifth part of such a price. And what sort of a man was this to offer it when, if he had waited half a minute longer, he would have secured what he wanted for a couple of shillings? But Gibbs cared for nothing of this now—they might call him and think him what they pleased,—and he pushed up to the table and claimed the precious volume. He soon set the auctioneer's mind at rest. "I will wait," he said, "till you make out my account." Then he stood there,—perhaps at that moment the happiest of all mankind.

"I should like to have had that fine volume of Shakespeare for my daughters," said the auctioneer, as he handed Gibbs the receipt, "but you are such a determined bidder there is no standing against you. A London gentleman, I presume,—might you be from London?"

"You are welcome to the Shakespeare," replied

Gibbs, ignoring the question. "It is—an elegant volume. And it is a family edition, which adds to its value. You may safely trust it to your daughters." Profuse were the happy father's thanks for the gracious present.

An old lady had in the earlier part of the day purchased a large and substantial box for eighteenpence; Gibbs now hunted her out and offered her a sovereign for it. The old person was flustered almost out of her life at such a premium, and it evidently aroused some suspicion in her mind that the stranger might know more about its value than she did. It was not until she had herself examined every corner of it many times over, and taken counsel with all the friends and relations she could get hold of, that she consented to part with it—even then following it downstairs for one more search for possible hidden gold. Into this box Gibbs put first his prizes, and then the most respectable part of the remainder of his library. But the Annual Registers and the Miscellanies and the green-backed works by Mrs Sherwood he strewed recklessly about the room, and astonished the people who from time to time cautiously came in to have a look at him, by telling them that they could take what they liked away. With a wary eye on the donor the books were removed, and many a happy home in that remote district is even now indebted to his

generosity for the solid collection of works which adorn its humble shelves. If the constant perusal of 'L'Industrie Françoise,' the 'Géographie Ancienne Abrégée,' the 'Grammaire Espagnole Raisonné,' or the 'Histoire de Henri le Grand,' have in any way soothed the sorrows, lightened the labours, and improved the morals of the crofters in this part of the north of Scotland, the praise and the reward is due to John Gibbs the fisherman, and to no one else. If, as the old story-books say, the books have never been removed, there they are still.

Then the two men started on their way home. We said just now that Gibbs was perhaps for a short time the happiest man in the world; in making that remark we did not take into consideration Archie's feelings. He had bought a flaming yellow-red mahogany horse-hair sofa, three chairs, a clock-case, and an umbrella-stand, and above all a bed,—a real old-fashioned seven feet by five-and-a-half erection, with a sort of pagoda on the top. That he had only a "but and ben," with stone and mud floors, twelve by fourteen feet each, and a door leading to them little more than two feet wide, had not yet caused him any anxiety. But we believe that before that seven-foot bedstead was got through that two-foot door, the good-looking young woman, to whom half of it might be said to belong, expressed her opinion

of his judgment in a way which made him shake in his shoes, strong and able man as he was.

When Gibbs reached the inn with his precious cargo he came in for the end of what had evidently been a serious disturbance. The landlord was undergoing with what patience he might the angry reproaches of a little old man, who with uplifted finger emphasised every word he uttered. The stranger had his back to the doorway, as had also his companion, a tall lady in a grey tweed dress.

"It's most provoking and annoying," cried the old man. "I took particular care to write the name of your infernal place plainly!—I believe you got the letter!"

"I got no letter," replied the landlord, "or I should have sent the machine."

"But you should have got it!" cried the old man furiously, "and I'll find out who is responsible! It's scandalous!—it's—" he stuttered with rage at a loss for a word.

"You've lost a good day's fishing, Mr Gibbs, I doubt," said the landlord, looking as if he would rather like to get out of the corner in which the newcomers had caught him; they had cut him off coming downstairs and blocked the lower step.

"And I'll see that whoever is responsible suffers for it," went on the old gentleman in a very threatening way; "I'll show you——"

"Oh, man!" said the landlord at last, roused to retaliate, "I got no letter. And I do not care the crack of my thumb for you or your letter, or your threats, or your responsibilities! Here's a gentleman who has just come from the sale, and he'll tell you there was naething in it but a wheen sticks and books and rubbish,—a wheen auld chairs and pots!"

The strangers turned round at once to see who was appealed to. The man had a little red, angry face, and a long beard,—you will see fifty like him in any town in a day's walk. His companion would have attracted some attention anywhere; Gibbs got to know her face pretty well in the course of time, but though he felt it was what is called a striking one he never knew exactly why. He would have said that her hair was neither dark nor light, that her eyes were grey, her mouth and nose both perhaps rather large, and that she had full red lips—a commonplace description enough which would answer perhaps for three or four out of every dozen girls you meet. She was very tall —she stood a head and shoulders over her companion,—and her figure, though it would have been large for a smaller woman, was in just proportion to her height. She put her hand on the old man's arm, as if to check his impetuosity, and threw oil on the troubled waters as it is befitting a woman should do.

"It is really of little consequence," she said, "though it was provoking at the time. We only wished to have got some remembrance—of an old friend. I have no doubt that there was some mistake at the post-office. Come!" and with a pretty air of authority she led the old grumbler into the sitting-room.

Gibbs was by no means what is called a classical scholar. He had wasted—so it seemed to him—a good many years of his life in turning Shakespeare and Milton into very inferior Greek and Latin verse, and since he left Oxford had never opened a book connected with either of the languages—unless it was to see who the printer was. But he had a misty recollection of some passage which described how a mortal woman walked like a goddess, and he thought that then for the first time he understood what the old writer meant,—he knew then for the first time how a goddess moved.

If a traveller had passed by that lonely inn at midnight, he would have seen a bright light burning in one of its windows. And if he had returned two or three hours later, he would have seen it still burning, shining out like a beacon over the wild moors. The salmon-fisher had forgotten his craft, the politician his newspaper, the admirer of goddesses that such creatures ever existed upon the earth. It was very late, or early, before Gibbs had finished his

investigations and retired to his bed, and then his sleep was not a pleasant or a restful one. Unless it is pleasant to have hundreds of other people's poor relations standing in endless ranks, holding out thin and empty hands for help; unless it is restful to have to drive a hûge wheelbarrow along in front of them, heavy at the commencement of the journey with first editions, uncut, of the quartos, but gradually growing lighter and lighter as they one by one slipped down the pile, and fell off on to the muddy roadway.

## II.

Two parties cannot be long together in a small country inn without getting to some extent to know each other. Gibbs began by the little services which a man can always render to a lady, opening doors, lending newspapers, and so forth. A dog, too, often acts as a sort of introduction to two people who are fond of that animal; and the fisherman was the possessor of a small, short-legged, crust-coloured, hairy creature, answering to the name of Growley, which soon twined itself round the lady's heart, as it did round all with whom it came in contact.

The travellers' name was Prendergast. They had evidently not intended to make a stay in

Ross-shire, having brought little with them, but in a few days a considerable addition to their baggage arrived. The old man seemed to be something of a naturalist. He wandered about the moors with a green tin-box kind of knapsack on his back, but he said little about his captures, and Gibbs taking no interest in such pursuits never asked leave to see what was in it. He also wrote a good deal. The daughter, who rejoiced in the quaint and uncommon name of Samela, spent most of her time sketching; whenever it was fine she was out of doors, and even pretty damp weather did not discourage her if she was in the humour. Clad in a short grey homespun dress, shod with strong but shapely boots, with an immense umbrella over her head, she was able to defy the elements if they were not very unpropitious. She met Gibbs's little civilities frankly and pleasantly, but never seemed to look for them; he rarely saw her when he was on the river, and, when they did by chance meet, a nod and a smile were often all that were vouchsafed to him. Gibbs was perhaps a sufficiently susceptible young man, but just now fishing was his object, and he had no leisure for flirting even if he had found any one willing to meet him half way. But still at spare moments he caught himself thinking about the lady more than he did about her father or the innkeeper, or any one else

about the place. At lunch-time, and when smoking his evening pipe, sometimes even when changing a fly to give a pool another cast over, her fair image rose up before him. Dinner had hitherto been a somewhat comfortless meal, hastily consumed, with one eye on 'The Scotsman' and the other on a mutton-chop. But now he was sure of meeting one pleasant face at any rate, and he enjoyed relating his adventures on the river, and looking at Miss Samela's sketches afterwards. Her father was no acquisition to the party; he was generally in a bad temper, and he seemed for some reason to have taken a dislike to Gibbs. An old man with a good-looking daughter is sure of attention and politeness on the part of a young man, but in this case the civilities seemed thrown away—there was little friendly response. Still Samela was always pleasant, and so Gibbs minded the less the somewhat brusque behaviour of the old collector of curiosities.

One afternoon the former, who had been fishing near the inn, went in there to get something he wanted, and on his way back overtook Samela, sauntering along with a large sketching-block under her arm.

"Will you come and draw a fight with a salmon, Miss Prendergast?" he asked. "There are a lot of fish up to-day, and I think I'm sure to get hold of one pretty quickly. I'm not a very

elegant figure," he added, laughing as he looked at his waders; "but Archie is very smart, and, at any rate, you will have a good background in the rocks on the other side."

Miss Prendergast said she was quite willing, and they went down to the pool. As a rule, when a lady comes near a salmon river and you want to show off your skill before her the fish sulk, and Gibbs was a rash man to give the undertaking he did. But fortune had hitherto been wonderfully kind, and did not desert him now. He had barely gone over half the water before up came a good fish and took him. For the next few minutes he was kept pretty busy. The fish was a strong one and showed plenty of fight; but it was at last gaffed and laid on the bank, and the lady came down from the rock she had settled on to inspect it. She did not say, "Oh! how cruel to stick that horrid thing into it!" or, "How could you kill such a beautiful creature?" or, "I wish it had got away!" as some ladies would have done. On the contrary, she gave the salmon—a bright twelve-pounder—a little poke with her foot, and said she was very glad it had been captured. Then Gibbs went up to look at her sketch and was honestly amazed at it. We once had the privilege of watching Mr Ruskin draw a swallow on a black-board,—half a dozen lines, and then you saw the bird flying at you out of a black

sky. So it was here: there was no weak or wasted stroke; the strain on the rod, Archie's symmetrical figure, the more concealed elegance of the fisherman were shown, as the former said, to the life.

"Well," said Gibbs, staring at it, "I think it is lovely."

Its author looked at it with her head on one side, as ladies often do look at their handiwork, and promised that when it was finished she would give it to him. Then she wrote down "dun" for the waders, and "grey" for the rocks, and "dark" where the water ran under the cliff, and a little "red" just in a line with the admiring Archie's nose, and went back to the inn. Gibbs fished out the afternoon, but he thought more about the lady and less about the salmon than he had done yet. He pondered a good deal, too, about the sketch, and racked his brains to think if there was any way in which he could make a nice return to Samela for it. She had declined to have anything to do with the fish, which he had at once offered to her, saying there was no one she particularly wished to send it to, or she might have been squared in that way. He might give her a book, —he remembered her saying, the first day they met, that she and her father had come up for the sale to get some remembrance of an old friend. Gibbs was pleased at this idea until he bethought

him what book he should give her, and then he was puzzled. Of course, as a mere remembrance, Josephus, or 'The Fairchild Family,' or even a volume of the Encyclopædia Britannica would do as well as another; but then—there would not be much generosity in handing one of those works over. Plainly the lady must be asked to choose for herself. Then Gibbs at once resolved that the quarto should be eliminated from the collection—the sketch would be purchased too dearly by its loss. As to any others, they must take their chance. On second thoughts, however, he concluded to conceal the works of Grimm—all the rest were to run the gauntlet of her pretty eyes.

A day or two passed before he was able to put his little scheme into execution. It will easily be understood—as has already been hinted—that a man on a salmon river is not, when the water is in good order, quite his own master. Business must be attended to before pleasure here as elsewhere. A start has to be made as soon after nine as possible, and if nothing untoward occurs, a certain pool should be reached at two for lunch. A rest of an hour is allowed here, but the angler would have good reason to be dissatisfied with himself if he did not devote the time between three and seven to steady fishing. This would take Gibbs to the end of his beat, and so far up it as to be back near the inn in time to change

before dinner. But he was getting into a somewhat restless state—a little impatient of all such salutary regulations,—and one fine day, instead of beginning a mile above the inn he began opposite it—to Archie's great disapproval—and so timed himself as to be back there soon after four o'clock. He knew that Samela would be thereabouts—she had told him that it would take her a day to finish her sketch.

"Miss Prendergast," said Gibbs rather shyly, feeling as if his little manœuvre was probably being seen through, "you said the night you came up that you wanted to have some little thing from the Strathamat sale, and I thought perhaps you would like a book. I got a good many books there, and any that you would care to have you are most welcome to." There was something of a conventional falsehood in this statement; there were a good many books he would have been very sorry to see her walk off with.

Samela looked up in his face, and Gibbs was quite sure she *was* beautiful; Venus was her prototype after all, and not Juno; he had been a little puzzled as to which deity favoured her the most. "It is very good of you," she said, more warmly than she had spoken yet. "I *should* like to have something." "It was horrid of me not to have thought of it sooner," said Gibbs. "Well now, will you come and choose for yourself? And

may I tell them to take some tea into my room? I am sure you must want some after your long day here. This second invitation was quite an afterthought, given on the spur of the moment, and he hardly thought it would be accepted. He was on the point of including her father in it when the lady fortunately stopped him, and said she thought she would also like some tea. "But may I stop ten minutes to finish this bit while the light is on it? Then I will come in."

Gibbs went in and ordered the tea, and then opened his old box and took out the quarto, which he embedded for the time being in his portmanteau; he had previously removed it from the old cover in order to keep it flatter in the box. It was a hard struggle for him to leave the Grimms, but at last he tore himself away from them. The maid brought up the tea-things, and then, peeping out of the window, he saw the tall form of his visitor disappearing through at the front door. He had a few seconds to spare, and he occupied them (we are sorry to say) in rushing at his box, tearing out the Grimms, and slipping one into each coat pocket. He had barely time to get to the fireplace, looking as self-possessed, or rather as little self-conscious as he could, when Samela came in. She made herself quite comfortable in an armchair by the fire, and *she* appeared as unself-conscious and innocent as a lady could be—as

no doubt she was. There were three cups on the tea-table, and this caused a little further embarrassment to the host. "Your father—would he—shall I ask him if he will come up?" he inquired.

"Oh, please don't trouble," said the daughter. "I know he wouldn't come if he is in; he never takes tea."

So there was no more to be said, and Gibbs did the honours as gracefully as a man in wading-stockings could be expected to do them, but some little part of his usual complacency was destroyed by an uneasy feeling that while he was so employed Samela's eyes were fixed on the side-pockets of his coat where the books were deposited, which he was persuaded bulged out shockingly. In the course of time he found himself sitting in another easy-chair on the other side of the fire, opposite Samela,—just as a young husband might be supposed to sit opposite a young wife in, say, the third week of the honeymoon. Gibbs began to feel as if he was married, and, what with this sensation and the knowledge of his bit of deceit, somewhat uncomfortable,—for a moment or two he almost wished that the old Professor would make his appearance.

Samela had never looked so bright and fresh and comely as she did that afternoon. There was just something in her position which would have made some girls feel the least bit embarrassed; they

would have shown their feelings by little nervousnesses—have laughed or talked too much; after all, she was only the chance acquaintance of a few days. But she sat there perfectly at ease, absolutely mistress of herself.

"I have brought you your picture," she said, and she gave it to him. It was a most masterly work in grey and yellow and brown, Archie's nose supplying just the little bit of warm colour that was wanting. "I think you have been a little hard on my waist," said Gibbs after he had sufficiently admired it. "And now will you please put your name to it; some day when you are a great artist I shall be envied for having it."

She laughed at the somewhat awkward compliment, and then in bold firm letters she wrote her signature.

"You have a very uncommon Christian name," he said. "I never saw it before. Is it one that belongs to your family?"

"My father used to be very fond of the old dramatists," replied the maiden,—and at the word "dramatists" the guilty Gibbs gave a little start and knocked one of the Grimms against the arm of his chair. "He found it in an out-of-the-way song in some old play."

"It is a very pretty name," said the criminal.

"I liked the song," said Samela. "I read it once a long time ago. But I think it is not very

wise to give a child names of that kind. There is so much risk in it. If I had grown up crooked or ugly my name would have been an injury to me." "It was pretty," as Mr Pepys used to say, to see how naturally she assumed her good looks. We may mention that before many days had passed Mr Gibbs's bookseller received an order (by telegraph) to supply him with the works of Robert Greene, out of which he hunted with some difficulty the very charming lyric the name of which stands at the head of this paper.

"And now for your books," said Gibbs, when his visitor declined to have any more tea. He showed her first a great carefully arranged pile in a corner of the sitting-room. There have been exceptions —those who collect fine bindings will at once recall some famous names—but as a rule women do not care for books as men care for them. Probably a large proportion out of the hundred would prefer—if the choice was given them and a book-rest thrown in—the *édition de luxe* of Thackeray to a rather dingy and commonplace-looking set of the original issues. Samela was one of the exceptions; she showed a quite evident, almost an eager, interest in the pile. The fashion for big volumes, for great folios and thick quartos, has died out,—so the men who deal chiefly in such merchandise tell you; but this lady seemed to be of the old school in this respect, and left the

octavos to the last. When he considered he had given her sufficient time for a rapid examination, Gibbs—with something of the feeling with which a schoolboy opens his playbox crammed with forbidden fruit before his master—prepared to show her his treasures. "What an ass I am," he thought as he turned the key. "I have done nothing wrong; and if I had, how could this girl know anything about it, unless she is a very witch!"

"Ah!" said Samela as the lifted lid showed her the inside of the box; then she swooped down and picked up the brown calf covering in which the quarto had hitherto had its home. She opened it; it was of course empty, and she asked the question—why?—with her eyes, looking then—so it seemed to the uneasy man—just a little like a schoolmistress who was not quite satisfied with his conduct. "Yes," he silently repeated, "I am a fool—and now I shall have to tell a lie about that book."

"Ah!" he replied in a sort of echo to her exclamation. "An old cover; it would do to bind something in." For the life of him he could think of nothing better to say.

Samela looked at the thread by which the quarto had been held in its place and which Gibbs had cut, and then she put the cover gently down. And then he took courage, and did the

honours of his box. He expatiated on the beauty and interest of Cruikshank's etchings; he pointed out how much the fine condition of the books added to their value; he enlarged on the spirit and colouring of Rowlandson's plates, and waxed eloquent on the exceeding rarity of the salmon-coloured wrappers. Samela listened patiently to his oration, and when he had finished she made him stand and hearken to a lecture from her.

"I don't agree with what you say about Cruikshank," said the fair monitress. "I know it is the fashion to collect his books, and of course there are some of his etchings that are wonderfully spirited and perfect. I like some of those to Sir Walter's 'Demonology,' and there is another book of his which I don't see here"—looking about her—"his pictures in Grimm's Fairy Tales,"—Gibbs nearly fell backwards into the box—"which are quite marvellous bits of work; I mean those that Mr Ruskin praised. But I always think his women are disgraceful; and when he means them to be pretty and ladylike he is at his worst; he must *sometimes* have meant to have drawn a lady. And Rowlandson too—isn't what is called spirit in him often only vulgarity? Look at that dreadful horse—there is no drawing in it—a child eight years old ought to be whipped if it couldn't do better. And look at that man! Certainly his women have sometimes pretty

faces, or rather prettier faces than Cruikshank's, but *he* never drew a lady either. And I can't admire your salmon-coloured wrappers!"

"I dare say you are right!" said Gibbs very meekly; he saw the cherished traditions of years overturned in a moment, without daring to fight for them.

"And now, may I really take any book I like for myself?" she asked.

"Any one," replied Gibbs, who began to wish himself down the river with Archie.

"But some of them are too valuable."

"I wish they were more valuable," said Gibbs, feeling rather faint.

"Well," said Samela, "I shall not trouble Messrs Cruikshank or Rowlandson." She went back to the large pile and picked up one of the books she had looked at before. It was a medium-sized, square, vellum-covered volume, 'De Instituendo Sapentia Animo,' by Matthew Bossus, printed at Bologna in the year 1495. "May I have this one?" she asked. "I like it for its beautiful paper and type, and its old, old date."

Gibbs, with more truth than when he had last spoken, vowed that he was delighted that she should have it; and he begged her to choose another, but this she declined to do. Before carrying off her prize she looked again at the old chest. It had evidently been made to hold

valuables in; it was lined with tin and had a very curious lock, which shut with a spring. But the queer thing about it was that the lock would not act when the key was in it, and Gibbs showed her how he had nearly put himself in a fix by laying the key inside the chest when he was shutting it. "I was just on the point of snapping the lock," he explained, "when I remembered. I don't suppose any smith about here could pick that lock."

"Well," said Samela as she prepared to march off, "I am very much obliged to you—for the tea, and for this charming book, which I shall value very much, and I am sure my father will too." She added laughing, "I am afraid I read you a terrible lecture, but you must forgive me. I dare say I was all wrong. You know a woman never knows anything about books."

After dinner Gibbs lit a big cigar and strolled slowly down the glen in a meditative mood. In some ten days his month would be up and he would have to leave his pleasant quarters. A week ago he did not know that such a person as Miss Prendergast existed in the world, and now he was beginning to debate within himself whether, before he went away, it would be wise for him to ask her to be his companion for the rest of his days. He had liked her for so easily accepting his invitation, and it had been pleasant to him

to look at her as she sat so comely and at home in the arm-chair by his fire. He thought in many ways—if she said "yes"—that they would get on well together. Of the likelihood of her saying it he could form no opinion. She might be already engaged; or she might be—for all he knew—a great heiress who would look with contempt on his moderate fortune. But as there are more indifferently well-to-do people in the world than wealthy ones, Gibbs sagaciously concluded that the chances were that she was not a great heiress. He thought that probably the Prendergasts were not very much burdened with riches; she had no maid with her, and, manlike, he perhaps judged a little by the plainness and simplicity of her dress. But the father and daughter might be criminals flying from justice for all he knew. An attempt he had made to find out from which quarter of the globe the old man came from had been at once nipped in the bud. In the event of success that old man would be a drawback. Then Gibbs looked into the future. He saw a comfortable house on a northern coast sheltered with wind-swept trees. He saw a sort of double-barrelled perambulator in the outer hall, and a tall figure emerging from the drawing-room, with her hand to her lips, as if some one was asleep. Then he looked and looked, but he could see no place for that old man; he did not see his shabby wide-

awake hanging up anywhere, nor his spiky stick in the place where sticks were wont to be; he could not anywhere get a glimpse of the green japanned knapsack. "If such things should come to pass," thought Gibbs, "I wonder if that old man would care—when he was relieved of the responsibility of looking after his charming daughter—I wonder if he would care to make an expedition to Honduras or Sierra Leone, and collect specimens of his things in those parts. He would have then a fine field for his energies." Then he thought of himself. Did he in reality wish for this change, or was it merely a passing gleam of light which shone on him, and which would pass away as similar lights had done before, and be little thought of afterwards? He was well past the romantic age as it is called, and he was very comfortable as he was. Marriage, unless the bride had some fair dower, meant giving up a good many pleasures — perhaps some little comforts; salmon-fishing for instance might have to become a thing of the past. "It's a devil of a thing to make up one's mind about," said Gibbs with a sort of a groan. So the man argued with himself; now he found a reason why he should try and win Samela, now another why he should get away to his native land as quickly as he could.

These reveries had carried him a couple of miles down the strath. He had just turned when he

heard voices before him, and soon in the deeper one recognised that of his faithful gillie, Archie. Gibbs was in no mood to stop and talk to the lovers,—he felt sure that the weaker vessel would turn out to be Jane,—and he stood off the road, in the deep shadow of some trees, to let them pass. The pair were sauntering slowly along in very loverlike guise.

"He's after her—he's aye after her," said Archie as they came within hearing. "He's talking wi' her, and laughing wi' her, and painting wi' her, whenever he gets a chance, but whether he'll get her or no is a matter aboot which I shouldna like to say. And I'm much mistaken if he isna *smoking* wi' her! If I didna see a cigar in her mooth the very day we lost yon big fish at the General's Rock, I'm no Archie Macrae but some ither body!" This scurrilous observation was founded on the fact that on the afternoon in question, after being nearly devoured by midges, Samela had, at Gibbs's suggestion, tried to defend herself with a cigarette. "Tobacco! wheu! filthy stuff! it's bad eneuch in a man, but in a wummin—! You'd better no let me catch you at the likes of yon, Jean, ma lass!"

"And do you think I'm going to ask *your* leave when I want to do aught?" inquired the shrill voice of Jane. "For if you do you're wrang!—and how'll you stop me?" Then there was a

slight scuffle and a slap, and the two happy ones passed on.

"You old scoundrel!" muttered the indignant master as he emerged from his place and continued on his way. "See if I don't sort you for that some day, you sanctimonious old beast! I hope she'll comb your hair for you—what there's left of it,—you long-legged old ruffian!" So the old saying was once more justified. Then Gibbs went home with a lot of resolutions and arguments so jumbled up in his brain together that he was quite unequal to the work of laying hold of any particular one and getting it out by itself.

Much to his surprise, our fisherman had a good night, and came down to breakfast with quite an appetite. The old Professor had nearly finished—he was an early bird,—and he was just off on an expedition in charge of a keeper to a loch some miles away, where a remarkably fine specimen of the *Belladona Campanulista* was said to have its habitation. Never had he shown himself so crabbed and unsociable as he did that morning. "Really," thought Gibbs, as he dug a spoon into his egg, "one would think I had done the old gentleman some personal injury by the way he treats me. But you had better be careful, my old cock! You little know what sort of a bombshell may be bursting inside your dearest feelings in the

course of a day or two. When you find yourself, with a steerage-ticket in your pocket, on board a P. and O. *en route* for foreign parts, you will perhaps be sorry that you didn't treat your new relation that was to be rather better." The old cock took this oration (which was delivered *in camera*) very quietly, and shortly after started for his loch. "It might clear the way if he got into a bog—with no bottom to it," thought Gibbs, as he watched him slowly climbing up the hill opposite. "He is probably beetle-catcher-in-general to some college,—he *would* be a father-in-law to have!"

On the whole he took a rather less roseate view of matters in the cold daylight. "There is no doubt it would be a horribly rash thing to do," said he as he began to fish his first pool, "knowing nothing about them; I think I'll——" then up came a fish, and the line ran out and the reverie was ended.

## III.

Forty miles away over the hills was another river, rented by a man whom Gibbs knew. Had sport been good, nothing short of an order from the War Office would have torn this man away from his water; but his fishing had been poor, and

he had announced his intention of taking a holiday from Saturday to Monday and spending it with his friend. In due time this gentleman, Captain Martingale, arrived, full to overflowing with grumbles and pity for himself.

"I never saw such a place," he exclaimed as soon as they had shaken hands. "It used to be a good river, but it's done now."

"Haven't you plenty of water?" inquired Gibbs.

"Water! that's the mischief of it, there's far too much! You wouldn't think a big stream like that would be affected by every shower, but it is—everlastingly jumping up and down! You get to a pool and think it is in pretty good order; you turn round to light a pipe, or tie a lace, or something, and when you look again it's half a foot higher, and rising still! And when I ask my gillie the reason, he points to a small cloud away in the middle of Caithness and says that's it. Of course, nothing will take; and indeed there is nothing *to* take; those infernal nets get everything; they got over a hundred last Tuesday—several over thirty pounds! I saw the factor the other day and told him what a shame it was, and he just laughed! The last time I was there, when old Newton had it, we used to get our four or five fish a-day, and here have I been slaving away from morning to

midnight, nearly, for a fortnight, and only got eighteen!"

"Oh, come!" said Gibbs, "that's not so very bad after all."

"Oh! that's all very well for you!" retorted the grumbler. "Look what you've done. In my opinion Scotland is played out for fishing. I shall go to Norway next year; and I don't know that Norway is not as bad."

Martingale picked up a couple of good fish that evening, and so became a little more cheerful. He had been shut up by himself for his two weeks, and was consequently very full of conversation, which was all about the great object of his life—sport. Before dinner ended he had nearly driven old Mr Prendergast frantic.

"Seems a queer old gentleman," he said the next morning, as Gibbs and he started on a smoking constitutional down the strath. "Not much of a sportsman, I fancy." Gibbs thought he was not much of a sportsman.

"The daughter is a fine-looking girl, though she doesn't look as if she *was* his daughter. I say, old chap, you had better be careful what you are doing; these are rather dangerous quarters for a susceptible man like you!"

When Gibbs learnt that his friend was to honour him with a visit, he resolved to be most careful in not giving him a hint as to the state of his—

Gibbs's—feelings. Good fellow as Johnny Martingale was, he was hardly a sympathetic person to confide in when the question at issue concerned the weaker sex. As Quakers have been held to be incapable judges as to the morality of any particular war because they are against *all* wars, so Martingale's opinions as to any particular woman were worthless, for he was against *all* women—so far as matrimony was concerned. So Gibbs made this resolve. But instead of fighting shy altogether of the subject and confining the conversation entirely to sport—which he might very easily have done—he allowed himself to hang about on the borderland, as it were, of the matter, and before dinner-time that Sunday the soldier knew pretty well what there was to know. In a solemn voice, and with many shakes of his curly head, he pointed out to his companion the danger of the path which lay before him. He explained—and really to listen to him one would have thought he had been married himself half a dozen times—all the disadvantages of matrimony.

"Marriage," said this philosopher, climbing on to the top of a stone gate-pillar, and emphasising his remarks with many waves of his pipe, "is a most serious matter." Gibbs climbed on to the top of the other pillar, and, facing his mentor, acknowledged the fact.

"You see," said Martingale, "so long as a man is a bachelor he knows pretty well how he stands; but it is quite a different thing when he's married. He doesn't know then what his income is, or which are his own friends and which are his wife's. He can't go off at a moment's notice—as we do—whenever he wants; he has to consider this and that and everything. Look at old Bullfinch! I assure you he'd no more dare to pack up his things and come here or go to town for a fortnight without his wife than he dared jump off London Bridge."

"Well, but," objected Gibbs, "Lady Bullfinch is such a caution! You don't often come across a woman like that."

"Don't you be too sure of that! She's married; they all lie low till they're married, and then they make up for lost time."

"I don't think Miss Prendergast would ever be like Lady Bullfinch," said Gibbs.

"I'm not so sure of that—you never can tell. She's the son of her father—she's the daughter of her father, I mean—and look at him! How would you like to have that old customer about your house for the next twenty years?"

"Ah," said Gibbs, glad to be able now to defend his conduct from the charge of rashness; "I've thought about that! You know he's a great beetle-hunter and ornithologist? Well, I would

try and get him some appointment in an out-of-the-way part of the world to collect them, and write home reports about them. The Government are always glad to get hold of a scientific man; and lots of people would help me, I know. I dare say your brother would?"

"Well, I dare say Bill would do what he could," said Martingale. "And where would you send him?"

"Oh, I thought of some hot country at first; but any out-of-the-way place would do. Oonalaska is a fine healthy distant hunting-ground, I believe; I was reading about it lately."

"Oona—— what?" inquired Martingale.

"Oonalaska—where the wolves are."

"Wolves—what wolves?"

"Oh! you know—'the wolf's long howl'—that place."

"Oh!" said Martingale. "And why do you send him there,—to be eaten up?"

"No, no," said Gibbs. "But when Samela and I are married—I mean *if* Samela and I are married—it would be a great nuisance to have him trotting in and out whenever he liked; and I believe this place is pretty hard to get away from when you are once there."

"Is there anything for him to hunt?" inquired Martingale.

"Sure to be—in the summer; of course in the winter he would have to vegetate—and write his reports."

"Well, there may be something in it," said the soldier, pondering over this summary way of getting rid of a possible father-in-law. "If the old boy is willing to go, it is all right; but I rather think you mayn't find it so easy to pack him off to such a place—he mayn't care about wolves and vegetation."

"He may not," said Gibbs with a rather downcast face.

"I say, my dear fellow," cried Martingale, nearly falling off his pedestal in his eagerness, "don't you be led into this! You don't know what it is! She has no money, you think? You won't be able to get away from home at all, and what will you do all the time? Go out walks with Samela, eh? You'll get tired of that in time."

"Oh, hang it!" interposed Gibbs, "other people do it and seem fairly happy. I think there's something in a domestic——"

"Oh, I know what you mean!" interrupted Martingale. "The curtains drawn, and the kettle boiling over, and the cat sitting on the hob, and you and Samela in one arm-chair in front of it. You can't always be doing that; and what will you do when all kinds of things break out in the

house at the same time?—measles, chicken-pox, small-pox——"

"You had better add scarlet fever and cholera. People don't have those sort of things all at the same time."

"Don't they? You ask my old aunt; she'll tell you. She had scarlet fever and measles and whooping-cough and erysipelas when she was seven years old—all at the same time. Think of your doctor's bills! Think of all the servants giving notice at once! Think of the cold mutton and the rice pudding at two o'clock! And not being able to smoke in the house! And your horses sold! And a donkey-cart for the kids! And think of all their clothes! Oh, Gibbs, my dear fellow, for goodness' sake don't be so rash!"

Gibbs shifted uneasily on his gate-post. "It sounds an awful prospect," he murmured, with a very uneasy countenance.

"Nothing to what the reality would be," retorted the philosopher. Then there was a long pause, the two worthies sat in silence on their pillars, disconsolately swinging their legs.

"Come, I say, Johnny," said the would-be wooer at last, a sudden light breaking in upon him. "It's all very well for you to sit and preach away like that; how do you know so much about women?"

"Because I've studied them," replied his mentor sententiously.

"I should like to know when. You fish all the spring; you shoot four days a-week from August to February, and then hunt till the fishing begins again. I'm sure I don't know how you square your colonel. When do you find time to study them?"

"Ah, that's it," said Martingale, looking very wise. "There's a good gap between the hunting and fishing time, and then there are two days a-week over, not counting Sundays; and all the time you devote to those musty books I occupy in studying the female woman."

"Then you've studied a bad sample. I know a lot of men who have married, and I can't at this moment think of one who has had all those diseases you reckoned up, or who eats cold mutton, or who doesn't smoke in the house if he wants to."

"Can't you? Look at old Framshaw."

"Well, — but Mrs Framshaw is a perfect Gorgon."

"They nearly all turn out Gorgons when they've got you; and it doesn't follow that when a man says he doesn't care about smoking that he is telling the truth; the wives make them say that. I'll tell you what, Gibbs, if I was you I'd be off."

"Do you mean at once?"

"I do," said the counsellor, looking very solemn.

"Oh, hang it!" exclaimed Gibbs, "I can't go till the end of my month."

"Look here," said his friend, earnestly considering, "why not go to my place?"

"But your water won't carry two rods."

"No, it won't. Well, now, supposing I came over here?"

"What! in my place?"

"Well, it would let you away."

"You abominable old humbug!" cried Gibbs, jambing his stick into the other's waistcoat, and nearly sending him over backwards. "I see what you're after! You want Samela for yourself, and my fishing as a little amusement into the bargain! I'll see you somewhere first!"

When these two debaters on matrimony came in to dinner, they found that they were to be deprived of the society of their only lady—Samela had a headache and was not visible. Perhaps Mr Prendergast had not looked forward with much pleasure to his dinner that night, but if he had known what he was to go through while it was taking place, we think he would have followed the example of his daughter without so good a reason. The conversation soon turned on sport, as it was sure to do when Martingale made one of the party. If it had been earlier, hunting would have been the topic to be discussed; if it had been later, shooting—now fishing held the field.

"Ever fished in Sutherland?" inquired Martingale of the Professor.

"No, sir, I have not," replied he.

"Fishing is getting played out in Scotland, I think," went on Johnny.

"It is possible," said the old gentleman. "The fact is of the less moment to me as I never intend to fish in Scotland."

"Ah," said the other, who could hardly conceive of any one not wishing to fish somewhere. "I dare say you are right; Norway is better, but Norway is not what it used to be."

"Probably not," grunted the tormented one.

"Oh, no. Newfoundland is better, but the flies are very bad there — eat you up; and then there's that place——" looking at Gibbs— "Oonoolooloo—what is it?"

"Oonalaska," supplied Gibbs, wishing his friend would be quiet.

"Oh, yes. Oonalaska, a fine place for sport that!" thinking he would do the latter a good turn. "Fine place for beetle-hunting,"—suddenly remembering more about the old man's proclivities.

"I never heard of the place," said the old man, staring across the table at Martingale.

"Where the wolves are," said Johnny, trying to help him out of a difficulty.

"Wolves!" ejaculated the Professor.

"Long wolves, you know," explained Johnny.

"What do you mean by long wolves, sir?" demanded Mr Prendergast.

"Faith, I don't quite know myself," confessed the other. "Easier to shoot, I suppose. Some one once complained of rabbits being too short,—eight inches too short. Now, these wolves are of the long breed, they——"

Mr Prendergast looked at Gibbs as much as to say, "You are responsible for the introduction of this lunatic," and then glared savagely at his *vis-à-vis*. But the soldier sat with an imperturbable look on his handsome face, twisting his moustache, and quite unconscious of having said anything out of the way.

Here Gibbs interposed. "He's mixing a lot of things up. You great owl," he said, glaring angrily at his friend, "what are you talking about? There's no fishing in Oonalaska, and no beetles—and no wolves either," he added in desperation. Then the conversation drifted in another direction, and, as soon as he could, Mr Prendergast made his escape.

"You played it rather rough on me, Johnny," said the soldier afterwards, "about that place."

"The old boy was getting angry," said Gibbs, "and besides, what I said was true. There *are* no beetles in Oonalaska, I have been looking up the authorities, it's too cold for them."

"Then you won't send your father-in-law there?"

"I think not," said Gibbs. "We'll try and find a warmer place for him."

"Well, old chap," said Martingale as he got into the dogcart the next morning, "if I can be of any help to you I will. You may rely on me; but if you have a crisis, try and have it on a Saturday. I can always get away that day or Sunday; but I believe that the fish run better about this part of the month, and it might be difficult for me to leave them in the middle of the week; though, of course, if it was very important, I would try and manage it." Then, with a few last warnings, the soldier climbed into his seat and drove off, having performed what he considered to be his mission.

The following day Samela was still invisible, and Gibbs spent his whole time on the river, fishing and communing with himself. The water was, as usual, in order, and there were plenty of fish up; a man had, as it were, only to put forth his hand and take them. But even a clean-run, inexperienced salmon will become uneasy when the fly and all the casting-line fall in a lump on to his nose; and the best gut will go if the whole force of a powerful greenheart is used to rip it up from a rising fish. "He was thinking he was fishing for a shairk, maist of the day," said Archie grimly on

his return to the inn that night. Gibbs lost fish and broke gut, and finally, when trying furiously to lash out an impossible line, got his hook fast in an alder behind him and broke the middle joint of his rod. Then he gave up his paraphernalia to the disgusted Archie, and slowly sauntered home by himself. Out of chaos he had at last evolved order, and his mind was made up. He would *not* make any attempt to woo Samela, *not* watch her sketching, or ask her to tea; above all, *not* give her an opportunity of sitting and looking fascinating in his arm-chair. In coming to this conclusion he was influenced by the facts, that he knew nothing about her and her father, that he could not afford to marry, and finally, that he was not at all sure that he was in love with her. A good deal of what Martingale had said he knew to be nonsense; but still, if a man will talk enough nonsense, some of it will find a home for itself, especially if it is poured forth on a Sunday morning by a man, looking as wise as Solomon and Rhadamanthus combined, perched on a gate-post.

"Of course I will be perfectly pleasant and courteous to her," thought Gibbs; "but I'll take care it doesn't go beyond that; I am sure it is the right thing to do." And having so determined his course, he became cool and almost comfortable again.

Samela joined her father at dinner. Her pale-

ness might be attributed to her indisposition; but was it due also to her headache that she seemed disinclined to talk to Gibbs—disinclined to laugh as she used to laugh, to inquire about his sport, and to ask what funny speeches Archie might have made that day? Had she too been making up her mind?

Gibbs had been looking forward to quite another meeting than this. He had anticipated some difficulty in gradually withdrawing the light of his countenance from Miss Prendergast; he had thought it possible that his courage might be rather put to the test when he had to meet her pleasant smile with one just a little less pleasant, and show her, gently but firmly, that he only looked upon her as a casual acquaintance. It was only a strong confidence in his moral capabilities which enabled him to prepare for the contest he expected. But now it was *she* who was cool, *she* who seemed indifferent, *she* who appeared resolved to treat him as she might treat a gentleman whom she had met yesterday, and to-morrow was going to say "good-bye" to. Never a whit had Gibbs calculated on all this; and when he tried some small blandishments—for the strong, determined man was already beginning to find the ground weak below him, and his moral courage slowly oozing out—it was still the same, they had no effect at all.

Before dinner was half over Gibbs abandoned himself to gloomy forebodings. He forgot all about his good resolves,—they became to him as if they had never been—thin phantoms which had never really occupied his mind. He cast about for some cause for this change. Had a bird of the air brought to her ears the somewhat free conversation which had been carried on about herself and her parent the day before? Had those sagacious-looking blackfaced sheep, or some roe crouching in the fern close at hand, delivered a message to her as the modern representative of their old mistress Diana? No; he thought it was more likely that Martingale was the cause. He was a fine-looking man; he was rich; moreover, his brother was a peer, and Johnny bore the little prefix to his name which is sometimes supposed to carry weight with some girls. What a viper! thought Gibbs; and how indecent of the girl to show her feelings so soon!

The dinner crawled along, and at last Samela rose, and, with a little bow to Gibbs, left the room. And then another astonishing thing happened! The old man became—not genial, for that was not perhaps in his nature, but—as little disagreeable as he could manage to be. He pulled up his chair to the fire, asked Gibbs if he was not going to have a little more whisky, and said it was a cold night in quite a friendly tone.

"Can it be possible," thought Gibbs, as he abstractedly poured out for himself a very strong glass of Clynleish, "that this ancient antiquarian knows his daughter's feelings, and is showing his compassion for me in this way?" And he looked with the greatest abhorrence at the Professor, who forthwith began to give a disjointed account of his adventures on the hill that day. Night at first brought no comfort to Gibbs. He anticipated a sleepless one; but perhaps his hard day's fishing in the high wind, perhaps the agitation in his mind, perhaps even the glass of whisky aforesaid, stood his friends. After tossing about in a restless way for twenty minutes he dropped into a deep and dreamless sleep.

The following day things were as they had been, only worse. Samela avoided him, and the day after they were no better. The only ray of light thrown on Gibbs was from the corrugated countenance of the old Professor, whose friendship seemed to increase every hour. Then Gibbs became unhappy, he lost half the fish he hooked, and he jumped upon Archie in a way that made that worthy's hair stand on end.

"She's heuked him," the latter whispered to Jane (he had acquired somehow an exaggerated idea of his master's wealth and importance), "and now she's playing him, and he's gey sick wi't, I can tell you; but whether he will stand the strain

o't, I canna say." Archie was nothing if not cautious. "I'd like fine to see you trying that game on wi' me, Jean, ma lass!" and then the colloquy ended in the usual way.

Now it happened one night, after dressing for dinner, that Gibbs was going down the passage, when, as he was passing Mr Prendergast's room, he heard two words spoken in a low passionate voice. They were only two words—"I cannot"; but there was an intensity in the way Samela uttered them which bit itself, as it were, into the brain of the hearer. Our fisherman had felt little scruple when chance put him in a position to listen for a moment to Archie's plainly expressed opinions, but he was no eavesdropper; he would have cut off his right hand sooner than have stood to try and hear what followed. He hurried down into the dining-room, marvelling what could cause the somewhat proud and independent girl to speak in such a fashion,—the horror and despair in her voice rang in his ears still. Mr Prendergast soon followed, and announced that his daughter was again too unwell to come to dinner; then, as had been his habit lately, he inquired with some interest about his companion's sport, and proceeded to give a long description of the difference which exists between a moth and a butterfly.

After the old man had disappeared Gibbs put

on a cape and went out down the glen. It was a wild wet night; the water was running here and there over the road, and he had to splash through it; the wind howled over the unsheltered moor and drove the rain smartly in his face; but the turmoil suited his humour, and he was glad it was not calm and fine. For he saw now—he seemed to see plainly, and he wondered how before he could have been so blind—that the piteous "I cannot" referred to himself. That old Professor had no doubt been making inquiries as to his—Gibbs's—means, had found them satisfactory, and now discovered that the girl was the obstacle, and he was showing her that she would have to follow his judgment in the matter and not her own wishes.

Poor Gibbs! Never till that night had his pride received so great a shock. He was not a man who in any way plumed himself on his influence with women, he had never in the smallest degree considered himself to be a lady-killer; but so far his acquaintance and experience with the gentler sex had been pleasant and easy. He had made many friends among women, hardly, he thought, any enemies. And now, without his having anything to say in the matter, he was being thrust on an unwilling girl; *how* unwilling he was to some extent able to measure by the exceeding bitterness of the cry he had heard. If

spoken words have any significance, then her feelings against him must be strong indeed.

The following morning Gibbs received a telegram, asking him to go that night to Inverness. The affairs of a minor for whom he was a trustee were in a somewhat complicated state; it was a question whether they ought not to be thrown into the Court of Chancery, and the matter had to be decided one way or the other at once. The London lawyer happened to be in Scotland at the time, and so offered to come as far as Inverness; indeed, was on his way there when the message was sent, and Gibbs felt there was no course open to him but to go there also.

There was a wedding in the strath that day and all horses were in great demand; so to suit the convenience of his landlord he sent his portmanteau early to the station, saying that he himself would walk. As he came down ready for the journey and passed the door of the sitting-room, Mr Prendergast and his daughter came out, the latter in her hat and jacket.

"I am sure," said the old man, "that you will be kind enough to escort my daughter so far as the post-office. I have a foreign telegram to send of great importance which I cannot trust to a messenger, and some inquiries will have to be made about the place it is going to. I can't go myself owing to my sprain" (got on the hill the previous

day), "and Mr Macdonald tells me that a trap will be calling at the post-office in an hour's time which will bring her back."

Gibbs listened to this long harangue without believing in it. It seemed to him to be an obvious excuse for forcing on a *tête-à-tête* walk between Samela and himself. If a telegram really had to be sent, it could be sealed up and the inquiry made by letter. He looked, while the father was speaking, at the girl, and he was greatly struck by the change in her face and manner. She was very pale, and seemed nervous and hesitating, as if she wished to say something and did not dare—a great contrast to the blithe lady of a week ago. Gibbs looked inquiringly at her, thinking she might make some excuse herself, but she kept her eyes fixed on her father; so he had no alternative but to say that he should be only too happy to be of any service; and then the two passed out of the lighted room into the twilight road.

His first feeling was one of hot anger towards Mr Prendergast. "What a brute he must really be," he thought, "to force the girl to take this walk with me to-night when it is quite plain she doesn't want to come. How hateful it must be to her!" A week ago he would have been delighted to have had the opportunity of such a walk: he could have at any rate chatted away in a natural manner and amused his companion; and now he

racked his brains to think of commonplaces with which to pass the time.

But it was hard for him to think of such things in the state of mind he was in. For what had been at first mere admiration had grown into love; it had thriven on opposition; the more hopeless it had seemed the more it had flourished, and the deeper it had struck into his heart. It gave a sore shock to his honest pride to think that he should so soon have become an object of aversion to the girl. Mingled with this feeling was one of intense pity for his unwilling companion, and he swore to himself that he would bite his tongue out before he would say one word to her of what he felt.

Gibbs made some remark about the night, and then the two went on in silence. Daylight was gone, and the moon was peeping up above the fir wood which covered the hill in front of them. The air was warm and moist, and the larches and the primroses, which grew here close up to the heather, made it sweet. It was such a night as might well draw out the boldness of a shy lover or the eloquence of a silent one. Thousands such would be abroad at that time, in crowded cities and fresh country lanes; some in hope, some in fear, some with happiness before them, some as he was, miserable. The man could hardly realise that only a few days before his greatest anxiety had

been about the weather, his greatest trouble, a fish getting away. He had since then conjured up for himself many vivid pictures of possible happiness. A week ago, if the realisation of the brightest of them had been a matter for himself to decide, he would have hesitated to confirm it; and now, some cold fate had cut the string on which he found too late his happiness had been secured.

Samela answered his remarks with monosyllables. He thought it was useless to try and force on a conversation, and for a long time they walked in silence; but at last this silence became oppressive to him and almost unbearable. They had come to a woody bit of the road which lay in deep shadow, the moonbeams not yet being strong enough to force themselves through the firs. Here Samela stopped suddenly. Gibbs thought she must have dropped something. "What is it?" he asked, going close to her. It is not often that one person can plainly hear the beating of another's heart; he heard it then. A feeling of tenderness and sympathy such as he had never known before came over him, and—without taking a thought of what he was doing—he put his arm round her waist. "Samela!" he whispered.

For one moment—for one moment—and the remembrance of that short passage of time will thrill him till he dies—he believed that the pressure was returned. Then she started from

his grasp, and sprang from him half across the road; her breath came short and quick, and she seemed to shake as a patient does in an ague-fit.

"Samela!" he cried again, frightened at her intense agitation. But she could not speak, and he felt how ungenerous he had been in taking advantage of her as he had done.

"You will forgive me?" he asked gently. "I will never offend you so again. I did not know that you disliked me—so much."

"Oh no! no! no!" cried the girl, and her wailing voice would have told him, if there had been any need of telling, whose cry it was he had heard in the room at the inn. "It is not that. Go on! go on! You must go on! I must go back!" She pointed forwards and then herself turned back.

"You cannot go back alone," exclaimed Gibbs; "I must go with you. Nay," he went on as she shook her head and quickened her step, "I will not speak a word, but just walk behind you. You will trust me to do that?" But still she waved him off; he advanced towards her and then she began to run.

"Good God!" cried Gibbs in an agony of despair, "what have I done to frighten her like this!"

"Do not follow me!" she implored; "I beg

you!" Then John Gibbs stood still in the middle of the road and watched the shadowy figure till it was lost in the blackness beyond.

Our fisherman was in a poor state to consider an intricate business matter the next day. The lawyer wondered at his absence of mind, that such a one should have been chosen for so important a trust. But at last what had to be settled was settled, and the afternoon found him hurrying back as fast as the Highland Railway would carry him. He experienced in Inverness one of those minor calamities which are not very much in themselves, but which, when great misfortunes happen to be absent, come and do their best to embitter our lives. In a word, he lost his bunch of keys and had to have his portmanteau cut open. The loss was to him inexplicable. He always carried them in his coat pocket, and he had felt them there after leaving the inn, rattling against his pipe. Now, as may easily be imagined, his mind was too heavily burdened with a real sorrow to give more than a passing thought to this small trouble.

Gibbs looked forward with great apprehension to his return to the inn. He dreaded meeting Samela; he could not imagine on what footing they could be now; he thought that she must have resented his conduct to her the more because he was as it were her guardian that night

perhaps she imagined that the whole affair had been arranged between her father and himself. At all events, he felt it would be very difficult to know how to carry himself before her. And still, at the bottom of his heart, the man had some kind of a feeling that all might come right yet.

The landlord was waiting for him at the station, and as they drove up the glen was eloquent on the glory of the wedding which had taken place the previous day. Such a feast! so many carriages! so many presents! and such a good-looking bride!

"How is the Professor's foot?" asked Gibbs, who could take no interest in brides that day, and was anxious to find out if the landlord had noticed anything wrong.

"There's no muckle the matter with his foot, I'm thinking," replied the landlord; "at any rate he's gone."

"Gone!" cried Gibbs.

"Ay," replied the landlord, "he is that. He went off in a great hurry to catch the first train this morning."

"And his daughter, is she gone?" gasped Gibbs.

"Gone too," answered the driver cheerfully, evidently enjoying the sensation he was causing. "Indeed, I understand it was on her account they

went; he told me that she was not well, and that she must see a London doctor at once." And as the worthy man said this he turned round and looked hard at his companion.

This intelligence was a terrible blow to Gibbs. How gladly now would he have gone through the meeting he had dreaded so much! Gone, without a word for him! He might have explained things somehow. What must she have thought of him? What had she told her father? Of course the illness was a blind. He thought it possible that there might be a note left for him, from the Professor; he did not expect anything from Samela—but there was nothing.

The place looked sadly deserted and lonely. He could not fish that evening; he went to the rock where Samela had made her sketch and stared long at the pool; then he went back to the house and took out her handiwork; he felt some queer sort of satisfaction in touching things that she had touched. So short a time had passed since her serene presence had lighted up that room; how different it seemed then! He could not bear the sight of his books.

The next day he fished, and came to a resolution, which was to go south at once; his month was nearly up, and he had lost all pleasure in the river. The landlord understood something of the cause which lost him his guest, and indeed far and

wide the gossips were at work. Accounts varied, but all agreed that Gibbs had behaved extremely badly and had lost his bride.

He had left some money in the big chest, and it was necessary to get it out. It was then for the first time that he remembered the loss of his keys. He tried to pick the lock but failed, and Archie, who was called in, had no greater success; so they had to force the lid. Gibbs put the money in his pocket, and then stood gazing at the little collection of volumes which had given him so much pleasure; now it pained him to look at them.

Of a sudden he saw something which made him start, and for a moment disbelieve the sight of his eyes. There, on the top of a book, lay his bunch of keys, the keys which he had had with him the night he walked down to the station! He picked them up and examined them, as if they could tell him something themselves. They were quite bright and fresh. By what legerdemain or *diablerie* had those keys found a resting-place there? It was an unfathomable mystery — a mystery which it seemed to him could never be explained.

Abstractedly he took up the calf binding, remembering as he did so whose hands had touched it last. It seemed strangely light; he quickly opened it, and then as quickly let it fall—the quarto was gone!

Some five years after the events we have been at so much pains to relate, John Gibbs was sitting alone in the reading-room of a northern county club; he was just putting down 'The Times,' when the heading of a paragraph in a corner caught his eye. It was as follows:—

HIGH PRICES FOR BOOKS IN AMERICA.—On Friday last the library of the late John Palmer of New York was disposed of by public auction. This collection was especially rich in early works relating to America, in histories of the English Counties, and in early dramatic works. Mr Palmer was well known for his enterprise and energy. In company with his daughter, and travelling often under assumed names, he searched all over Europe for rare books; no journey was too long for him, or price too high, if anything he wished to add to his collection had to be secured. . . . Under a somewhat acrid exterior lay a kind and sympathetic core. By his death many of the great booksellers of London and Paris lose a munificent customer. . . . There were fine copies of the second, third, and fourth folios—curiously enough the first was wanting. But the great glory of the collection were the quartos, which have been allowed to be, by those best qualified to judge, by far the finest in America—perhaps, barring those in the British Museum, and at Chatsworth and Althorp, the finest in existence. [Then followed a long list of prices.] The greatest excitement was reached when a copy of 'Love's Labour's Lost' was produced by the auctioneer. No one seems to have known of the existence of this copy, which was strange, as it is without the slightest question the most perfect copy in the world. Not only was it in beautiful condition and perfectly uncut, but the last ten leaves were *unopened*—a state which is, we believe, quite unique. It measures [so many inches].

It was enclosed in a magnificent crimson morocco case, without lettering on it, made for another work by the English Bedford. This most precious volume was sold for $6900, and was bought by Mr Cornelius Van der Hagen, of Chicago.

After reading this paragraph Gibbs sat for a long time in his chair quite motionless. The day had faded away outside, and the only light in the room was the warm glow of the fire. He sat for many minutes staring into it. At length he got up to go. "It was for him, not for herself," he muttered,—and something very like a tear rolled down his cheek on to the crisp paper below.

# THE HANDLEY CROSS NOVELS.

ABOUT the middle of the nineteenth century there appeared a series of novels depending for their chief interest almost entirely on sport. Impartial reviewers writing fifty or sixty years ago might have failed to prophesy their success, and cold-blooded critics of our own day, who are not interested in hunting, sometimes wonder at it. These stories are without plot of any kind: they are merely the loosely connected adventures of more or less shady characters, which might have been added to indefinitely, or brought to an end at any period, without interfering with the symmetry of the narrative. The heroes were either great knaves or fools; the heroines, who play a comparatively subordinate part in the various comedies, are, for the most part, either colourless creatures or no better than they should be.

Here is a great picture-gallery to which hardly any one was admitted who was not a rogue; the

majority of the people who fill both the prominent and subordinate places in, at any rate, the three principal novels, are intolerable frauds; they are excruciatingly vulgar; they are swindlers, for the most part just as ready to get the better of a friend or of a host as of an enemy; of honour they have no more conception than they have of Sanscrit; for kindly acts, for gratitude, or generosity, or faithfulness we may search these thousands of pages almost in vain. They lie and drink, and do their companions and every one they associate with, and bilk their tradesmen; they gamble and cheat; they are cowards and braggarts, they are toadies and stingy and mean; it is almost impossible to think of one of even the least of the virtues with which they had anything to do; there is hardly any break in the monotony of viciousness. Finally, there is no appeal here to fastidious readers on the score of literary finish or grace: the work is rough-hewn and carelessly fashioned, written with a running pen.

And yet for some strange reason these novels are very famous; it was more than mere cleverness which possessed their author; it must have been something very like genius which enables him to "wallow" amongst petty vices, and discuss, with so much minute detail, such utterly contemptible characters without disgusting and sickening his readers. But Mr Surtees did far more than this:

he not only did not disgust his audience, he may be said to have fascinated them. They paid him, and still pay him, the highest of all compliments—they come back to him, and read and re-read his books till they know some of them almost by heart, and learn to look upon the chief characters in them with affection instead of loathing.

During the last sixty years many sporting novels—clever and otherwise—have had their day and passed into oblivion; they stand dusty and untouched in old libraries, and figure at low prices in catalogues of second-hand books, but the average modern reader knows nothing of them. Those of us whose fathers or grandfathers laid aside at the time of issue the thin paper-backed parts—fourteen or sixteen of which made up a volume—of the books we are discussing, may commend their care and foresight. These parts were sold at a shilling; bound at the time "in the original salmon-coloured cloth" they represent a goodly profit, whilst in those same parts, clean, tidy, and complete, with all the coloured engravings and little woodcuts and advertisements, you shall hardly get the set of five volumes, once sold at something under four pounds, for less than a hundred.[1] Our ancestors lost great opportunities of benefiting their posterity when they failed

[1] On the 1st of May of this year—1912—the 17 parts of Handley Cross were sold by auction in London for £77.

to buy books and engravings which were to be secured for a song then, but are now worth almost their weight in gold. As is the case always with popular books, especially those containing coloured pictures, many of the copies we come across are sadly knocked about, mutilated and soiled, closely cut, and strangled in common leather bindings; these are looked at askance by knowing people, whatever may be the date on the title-page. It is said that some of the Shakespeare folios and early quartos show here and there by melancholy stains where, perhaps in the reign of James the First, a careless reader—an English beauty maybe—left between the leaves a flake of the pastry he or she was eating, a perpetual memorial to them, and a signal instance of the error of trying to do two things at once. So the reader of hard-worked library copies of Mr Jorrocks or Soapey Sponge is sure now and then to be offended by the signs of long-ago knocked-out pipes.

It was a great advantage to the Surtees Novels to have had Leech as their illustrator. Their author, as a rule, is most precise in his descriptions, not only of the faces and figures of his characters, but also of their attire, down even to such minute details as the quality of the leather in their boots and the pattern on their waistcoats, and we could always have formed for ourselves a series of fairly accurate portraits. But it may be

questioned if our ideas would have come up to the artist's—if we could have imagined Jorrocks, and Sponge, and Pigg, and Benjamin, and Jogglebury Crowdey, and Jack Spraggon, as we know them to be now. How much we owe to Leech we may judge by what other men did who preceded him and followed after him. The pictures in 'Hillingdon Hall' are very inferior, and when, owing to his death, H. K. Browne was brought forward to finish 'Facey Romford,' we see the difference in the last ten plates, although here the latter artist had the models of his great predecessor to go by.[1] Leech was a quite ideal illustrator for such books; he entered with heart and soul into his work, and he was a hunting man himself. We must be grateful to him as well as to Surtees when Jorrocks in his varying moods comes up before us; Jorrocks when he "thinks he will shoot Doleful," when he sees "the biggest fox whatever was seen"—when he interviews, behind the door, the irate Captain Widowfield, when he is lecturing, or preparing that tremendous seidlitz powder, or having a bye-day, or a bath at Ongar Castle—to take a few only of the many pictures in which he is presented to us.

We shall, without hesitation, put 'Handley Cross' in the first place among the novels, 'Soapey

[1] The admirable recent illustrations of Mr Armour and Mr Cecil Aldin must be exempted from this criticism.

Sponge' second, and 'Facey Romford's Hounds' third, and bracket 'Ask Mamma' and 'Plain or Ringlets?' and 'Hillingdon Hall' together. 'Hawbuck Grange' may be left out of the list, and Jorrocks' 'Jaunts and Jollities': they are inferior to the other stories and have never been so popular. Good copies of the first editions of the two latter books are not easy to find, and bear a high price, but they appeal perhaps more to a collector that a reader.

Now comes the question—not an easy one to answer: *why* are we so interested in these novels? why do we tolerate some evil people in them, and like others—just as bad, whilst for two or three of their principal characters we have a feeling which must be expressed by a stronger word? It is not only because they make us laugh. We may love Mr Pickwick and Uncle Toby, who in addition to amusing us are both full of the milk of human kindness. But there was perhaps never created a race of people freer from any taint of amiability than those we meet in the Handley Cross Novels. Falstaff is probably the most worthless character in the three plays in which he occupies a prominent part, and yet we suspect that many choose those plays to read almost entirely because he is one of the chief personages in them. Why should we love Jorrocks? It is not only strait-laced people who

would call the grocer of Great Coram Street a good-for-nothing old reprobate: he must always have been a most unsatisfactory person to deal with—in the country, that is to say; we are particularly told that on 'Change he was "highly respectable"—at Handley Cross we know quite well he would have tried to get the better of us. If by hook or crook he could have sold "Arterxerxes" to a friend for the "three 'underd" which he bid in desperation at his own sale, he would have done so,—though he knew quite well the real worth of that animal was only five-and-twenty pounds. But as men who deal much in horses will think this a very venial offence, we ought to add that the worthy Master was also a compound of small vices, with very few virtues to redeem them. He was unscrupulous and crafty, and addicted to very bad language. He was too fond of flirting with pretty housekeepers. (Those who have read carefully the description of his spouse as given by the author, and remember Leech's portrait of her, will be inclined to deal gently with him for this failing.) He drank a great deal too much of his fruity port, and was often extremely quarrelsome. He behaved in a most outrageous manner to any one he did not like; he was rude and spiteful, and had small regard for the truth if he thought it would pay

him better to tell a lie, or a long series of them. He is an outrageous and quite impossible person; it is hard to say why we should tolerate him, and we do far more than that: we forgive him for all his misdeeds; we sympathise with him in all his troubles; we wish him well out of all his disputes and rows; we are glad when he is triumphant and his enemies are confounded, even when, in our inmost hearts, we know his enemies were in the right and he wrong. This Master of Hounds was not even good at the business which occupied his later years: he was a poor rider; he has to acknowledge this himself. He is always paying sixpences and shillings to stray folk who catch his horse.

Poor rider though he was, he is a very great sportsman: none greater, so far as we know, is recorded in history: it is, we believe, chiefly owing to this quality, to his intense enthusiasm, to his pluck (even though he would sometimes drag his horse through a fence instead of riding him at it), to his determination not to be beaten, that our hearts go out to him. He was no fine-weather huntsman: he was always sneaking away with Pigg or Charlie Stobbs for a bye-day. That was one where he is shown by Leech in sad predicament: lost on the common in drenching rain, darkness coming on, and only a couple of donkeys

as companions;[1] that was the night he got to Ongar Castle and into the plunge-bath. The celebrated "Cat and Custard Pot" day was another "bye." There was a third at "The World turned upside-down," when the weather was so bad that the Master informed the groom of the cut-me-down captains that he declined to cast off "unless good *payin'* subscribers to the amount of thirty pounds" turned up. On such days Pigg and Stobbs and Benjamin and the M.F.H. himself constituted the field. It was not to show off fine clothes, or good horses, or desperate riding that the old tea-dealer took the field. It was for sheer unadulterated love of the sport, "the image of war without its guilt and only five-and-twenty per cent of its danger," the burning wish to get the better of some "old customer," some "biggest fox whatever was seen." Nothing stopped him from going out hunting: the risk of breaking his neck half a dozen times a day; of being half smothered in bogs and then being laughed at as he rode home, by Mrs Gallon and the barber's pretty wife, for having a dirty coat. (We rejoice when one of these ladies applies for assistance in regard to a certain patent mangle, and is detected by the M.F.H.) If it is not this burning zeal and

[1] The writer of this paper is the possessor of Leech's original sketch for "Mr Jorrocks has a Bye-Day," and for "Old Peter the Waiter" in 'Ask Mamma.' The latter is an especially clever little bit of work which loses something in the reproduction.

determination to get the better of his opponents, —two-legged ones or four,—added to his abounding sense of humour, or at any rate his power of amusing other people, that endears the old Master of Hounds to us, then we do not know what it is, and give up the problem.[1]*

Jorrocks is the outstanding figure in the novels: there can be no question of this; it may be doubted if any one can be put second to him. But in second or third place it can as confidently be asserted that here must come Soapey Sponge.

We may have an uneasy feeling that strict justice has not been dealt out to Sponge in the novel that bears his name. If Jorrocks is not a creditable specimen of a man, Sponge is a very bad one indeed; he has no good points about him at all: we defy any one to read his life and point out one single virtuous action in it; he was bad alike in big and little things. If the Handley Cross Master's doings in regard to dealing with horses were shady, the other man's were outrageous; here he stands forth as a swindler pure and simple. And he was shabby and mean also in little matters: he passed off a fourpenny bit as

[1] Lest we should have been considering the matter too much from an individual point of view, we made inquiries from various prominent people, both publishers and librarians, in London and Edinburgh, and we are able to assert that there is still a steady and quite satisfactory demand for the Surtees Novels, while the value of the old editions is, as has been said, continually increasing.

a sixpence on the old harridan who cleared away the remains of the overnight's debauch at Nonsuch House. He induced Mr Jogglebury Crowdey to pass through a turnpike, which the latter would otherwise have avoided, by pretending to have the coin ready, and then saying he had forgotten his purse; he commits all kinds of shameful actions. No one wants Jorrocks to be punished when he does wrong, but we ought to rejoice when Sponge was found out and suffered. But here again the extreme cleverness of the author comes in: we find ourselves taking sides with Sponge. Possibly this sympathy is of a bastard kind, and is due to the fact that most of the people he came in contact with were as shabby and mean as he was himself, and not so clever. Sponge and Facey Romford share with Jorrocks his insatiable love of sport as represented in hunting; but while Jorrocks' performances fell far short of his ideas, the other two were masters of their art: they are genuine, unadulterated sportsmen; there is no humbug about them here. They knew pretty well all that is to be known about hunting and the ways of a fox; they could ride any kind of horses, and, good or bad, get out of them all that there was to get, and they had courage as well as skill: this was the one solitary thing about them that was not mean or sordid.

So, for some queer indefinable reason, we sympa-

thise also with these two scoundrels—they may fairly be so described. For 408 pages Sponge acts up to his name; he goes about passing himself off as something quite different to what he was, and trying to swindle people; and yet we feel rather sorry for him when his miserable schemes fail and he is found out. Jawleyford is such a contemptible creature that it is well he should be deceived,—and this may be also said of Facey and the "amazing popular man," and even old Joggle-bury, though on several occasions, especially on the famous day's shooting, the chairman of the Stiff-and-Stir-it Union had far too much impudence to put up with. Foxey-faced Romford was nearly too much for Sponge: it was a genuine case of knave cut knave here; difficult to know who ought to win, but for our part we always backed the guest, and could not pretend to be sorry when the latter got away without paying that "sivin pund ten" (which caused him so much trouble afterwards) and Leather butted the unfortunate host down the stairs and put his shoulder out. It seemed right that Sponge should get something to his credit after the meal of black puddings and pork, and that awful night. Facey was not perhaps a bigger rascal than Sponge, but he was a bigger ruffian, and it is well that Leech changed his appearance when he began to illustrate the book called after him. He is at any rate

like a human being in the picture where he confronts his uncle's widow and her flourishing family: it would almost have been impossible to read a long novel with a hero in it such as appears playing "Jump Jim Crow" on the flute to the unwilling guest in Mrs End's lodgings.

Hardly a single one of the "gentlemen" represented in the novels would have had the slightest chance of being elected to a respectable Club, and the servants are for the most part, like the masters, impudent and shameless. The huntsmen are a bragging and incompetent folk. A kindly word is said of Peter, who had charge of the hounds in the Vale of Sheepwash, but he was only a "pedestrian huntsman." Mr Lotherington was a poor creature, and Jack Bragg a worse, and Watchorn was a shocking example: these men had not even learnt their trade, and were storehouses of conceit and impudence. They knew more about "bagmen" than natives: they stole each other's foxes, and, it seems, sometimes each other's hounds. The grooms were like to them. Leather is an appalling example of a worthless servant; only once in his long career can we feel any enthusiasm for him, when, as before mentioned, from motives of self-interest, not of loyalty, he butted Facey downstairs and saved his guest's belongings. The valets were no better: they robbed their masters, and hid under beds to

hear what young ladies prying into strange rooms had to say about them.

Leech drew charming pictures of the ladies. He was far more generous to them than to his menfolk. This was an age of hair and whiskers, and the portrait of Mr Sponge in evening dress is almost as strange to us as that in 'Vanity Fair,' which shows Rawdon Crawley as a smart officer of the Guards at the beginning of last century. Emily and Amelia Jawleyford are pretty in their old-fashioned dresses. So is the buxom housemaid whom Sponge "demands an explanation from" in the smoky bedroom. Mrs Springwheat is a comely and comfortable person, as also her sister, the mistress of Puddingpote Bower, and no one has aspersed "Murry Ann's" character or looks; the ladies in 'Ask Mamma' and 'Plain or Ringlets' are generally respectable and uninteresting. It has always seemed to us that the Scattercash series of incidents is overdone; we know that there did not exist in civilised society in England two generations ago such people as Lord Scamperdale and Jack Spraggon, and Jogglebury Crowdey, or Sponge himself, though no doubt there were types from which you might have got something of the kind represented. But when we come to Nonsuch House we realise still more plainly that the caricature is exaggerated. The author was apt to repeat himself: if he got hold of what

he thought a good thing he sometimes worked it too hard. He did this, we think, in drawing poor weak Sir Harry. Scott has been found fault with for telling us that Dominie Sampson never spoke without saying "prodigious," and for making the gallant major in the 'Legend of Montrose' introduce the name of the "Lion of the North" into every sentence. It is not because of anything Sir Harry Scattercash *says* that we make any complaint; it is because of what he does *not* say. Not once, we believe, does he finish a sentence: it is *always* cut short by a hiccup; the emphasis which might be given by such a note of exclamation now and then is lost.

The Fair Sex were well represented at Nonsuch House: there is an admirable woodcut showing how one of them attempted, for once without much success, to fascinate the Johnny Raws who come to hunt on the frosty Christmas Day. The latter—you can plainly see by their faces and attitudes—were shy about coming in, for reasons given them by their mamma, reasons which Miss Harriet Howard —whose real name was Jane Brown—persisted in finding out, to her great discomfort. These friends of poor Harry's—with his failings, and his hiccups, and his connection with Bugles, life was full of troubles for him—these "friends" said many things which would have shocked the author

of 'The Fairchild Family' or 'Little Henry and his Bearer.' They drank his wine night and day, and played with his money, and rode—or rather did *not* ride—his horses. They were generally half-seas-over, at breakfast as likely as dinner: when Sponge arrives for the former meal his host makes a place for him at the table by clearing off all the china that was in the way with his hunting-crop. Lucy Glitters, "most pernicious woman," is far more respectable in 'Facey Romford' than at this country house, where she and her friend Miss Howard thoroughly enjoyed themselves, took part in the revels which went on in that most uncomfortable of establishments, and now and then said things which ought to make us blush: in truth some of the women are a queer lot. But this can be said, and said with emphasis and honesty about all the novels—there is absolutely nothing in them which can do any one any harm. Young men and maidens—ladies, we observe, are not great admirers of Sponge and Jorrocks—can read every page without running the slightest risk of being demoralised. No one was ever made a cheat, or a drunkard, or a disreputable person, by their most prolonged and earnest study. What coarseness there is comes seldom, and has a healthy breezy twang about it which makes it quite harmless. There are no sex problems investigated here, or philosophical philanderings.

There are in 'Jorrocks' and 'Soapey Sponge' some dozen scenes which stand out prominently from the narrative as laughter compelling to all people who have any sense of the ridiculous, and know ever so little about horses and hounds. Of course here and there are to be met with individuals so constituted that they would not see the humour in them; like Mark Twain's owl, which had been at the Yo Semite and was not amused at the blue jay story, no tickling will make them smile. One of these purple patches is the great dinner at Handley Cross, given in honour of the hunt. It was not for want of careful coaching that difficulties arose that night. Miserrimus Doleful did all that was possible to drive into the Master's head what he was to say and what avoid; explained how he was to praise, in honeyed words, not only the sport with which he was so intimately connected, but also those of other people: cricket, quoit players; racing, with Mr Strider to respond: we have a vivid portrait of Mr Strider a page or two further on, coursing, with Captain Couples as assenter: "the merry harriers"; Mr Snapper for pigeon shooting. Cordially did Mr Jorrocks agree to his Vice's programme, and make preparation for the sixteen toasts. Think of a dinner with sixteen toasts preceding a ball! Leech shows us exactly how the M.F.H. appeared on the eve of the dinner,

contemplating the pretty maid who is holding up a sucking pig for his inspection. "See and conduct yourself like a gentleman," says his spouse, "nothing so vulgar or ungenteel as getting intoxicated." Alas for Mr Jorrocks! What a scene is that when the outraged representatives of racing and harriers and greyhounds storm the platform and attempt to slay the chairman, and one of the Master's coat-tails is torn from him to hang for ever afterwards as a banner screen in a Dotfield lady's drawing-room. Truly it was what the local "Paul Pry" calls it, "a most convivial evening."

The M.F.H.'s Journal was well worth handing down to posterity: here we first read about "the old customer" who nearly broke his heart in the "Pinch-me-near Forest." Here he chronicles his losses, his bad days, generally adding the words "the musciful man is musciful to his fox," just, says the author, "as if he could have killed him if he choose." Where, north or south of the line, is that phrase not known? Here are the replies to the people who pester him for assistance. To the woman who has had her patent mangle seized for rent, and hopes the M.F.H. will redeem it, he "presents his compliments, and is sorry to hear of the sitivation of her patent mangle, but the M.F.H., having laid it down as a rule never to subscribe to redeem patent mangles, can't

depart from it in this case." He notes—"If I mistake not, this is one of the saucy jades wot laughed at me when I came 'ome with a dirty back."

The letters which passed between Jorrocks and Dr Sebastian Mello as to the operations of the former's peacock, Gabriel Junks, will be read when correspondence, on which once hung the fate of nations, has passed into oblivion. They are too long to quote: Jorrocks asserts it is impossible that Gabriel can have "slain the doctor's dung'll cock," but he ends his letter with the greatest politeness, "nevertheless the M.F.H. begs to assure the doctor of his distinguished consideration." The doctor refuses to accept this reasoning and returns to his charge, and now, in addition, accuses the master of unbecoming conduct. Our diarist's memorandum as to this is "to take 'orns as well as 'ounds next time, and blow before his house—a beggar."

"Paid for catchin' my 'oss 1s." is an item here—clearly it was advisable for Mr Jorrocks to carry plenty of small change with him when he went a-hunting, for he had soon after to reimburse some one with 2s. "for catchin' my 'oss twice," and another 6d. goes in the next entry. But all this was nothing to what happened to him a short time after, on a private bye-day with Pigg, when he got stuck in a snow-wreath and had to be

dug out at a cost of seven shillings, the tinkers who found him refusing to give any assistance till a bargain had been struck. About this time he "lectored Pigg for swearin' at a large payin' subscriber." "The idea of swearin' at a gen'l'man wot gives £50 a-year to the 'ounds!"

There is a little incident in the Pomponious Ego day which will remind some men who hunted a good many years ago with the old Berkshire of a well-known anecdote connected with the once master of that sporting pack. Leech presents Jorrocks to us after a nasty fall, with his hands on his back, and his countenance inflamed with wrath, replying to the well-meant inquiry of one of the field: "Hurt, sir," he repeated, looking as though he would eat him; "no, sir, not at all—rather the contrary." On p. 402 we have a sad spectacle entitled "Mr Jorrocks and Pigg drink fox-hunting": they have an anxious confabulation where they shall hunt the next day: they began by drinking each other's health: then the health of the hounds. "Priestess" first, then "Manager," Jorrocks gave "Ravager," Pigg gave "Lavender"; then followed "Affable," "Crowner," and "Lousey" —all the pack, in short.

This was the night—known to the whole hunting English-speaking world — when Pigg made that unforgettable answer to his master's question. How often—how many thousands and thousands

of times a-year—are those words quoted by men who look out to see what the weather is likely to bring them in the morning—not for hunting only, for farming, and fishing, and shooting—for every kind of sport. "Look out of the winder, James, and see wot'un a night it is," said Mr Jorrocks: he wanted rain and had prophesied it, and now heard the fire begin to hiss. Then the huntsman poked his nose into a dark cupboard instead of the warm, damp night air, and made the reply. What a night that was! They arrange "another last day" to start at six, and Pigg is to have a gallon of XX and "a werry big-bottled gooseberry-tart" for his breakfast. Nature sees to it that when mankind trespasses he is punished for it sooner or later, and Mr Jorrocks was very soon punished for his share in the debauch. In the very next chapter we see him lying on his back with a most agonised countenance, and the "old customer" sitting on his chest. The light-coloured varmint had spent the night in tormenting him, now running between his legs and upsetting him, now as chairman of a convivial meeting of foxes making faces at him, now writing to 'The Field' to say he was the worst sportsman and greatest humbug that ever got upon a horse. As usual on such occasions Mrs Jorrocks suffered greatly, and has as bad a time as our Master.

Facing page 407 in the original edition of 'Handley Cross' is one of the best known of Leech's pictures: the master sits on Arterxerxes, "behind a gnarled and knotted ivy-covered mountain ash," a fair wide grass-ride stretches past him, over which some disturbed pheasants are flying; it is bordered by leafless trees whose line is broken by two or three Scotch firs, and across this woodlawn, with unsoiled brush trailing on the ground, and cunning eyes and set-back ears, "with lightening fur telling of many season's wickedness," steals the "Old Customer." The last day of his happy life has come now; slaying fat ducks and turkey poults, long woodland siestas, and adventurous night-ramblings are passed for him. Mr Jorrocks, we regret to say, shows little generosity to his fallen enemy; he does not see the pathos of his death. "Hooray! hooray! hooray! hooray!" shouts he, holding the fox over his head, his linen flying out, and his enthusiastic old face beaming with joy, "you've been a hugly customer to me," he cries, looking the fox full in the face, "dash my vig if you haven't," and then, for the first time on record in the field, he breaks into song. This celebrated picture, as all the world knows, or ought to know, is subscribed, "Mr Jorrocks wants twenty."

How often during sixty years has the remembrance of this coloured engraving come into the

minds of men in like positions, how many foxes have died because of it, how many great runs has it been the progenitor of! It represents a vast accumulation of hunting wisdom: "Mr Jorrocks," we are told, "can hardly contain himself, and, but for his old expedient of counting twenty, would infallibly have holloaed."

It was ever so with our Master—he had the enthusiasm of a boy: from page 60, when he hops round the breakfast table in joy at getting the invitation to become a master of hounds from Doleful, Simon Hookem, and the other wretches ("was ever anything so truly delightful!" he cries), down to page 550, when we find him arranging for those frequent bye-days in Pinch-me-near Forest, his ardour and keenness are unquenchable.

It has just been said that no other feelings but joy and triumph enter into Mr Jorrocks' heart when he gets the better of his old enemy; the only occasion, so far as we are aware, when he exhibits any sentiment is on the day of the sale of his horses, and it is only a very little bit of sentiment, tinged too by considerable worldly feeling. Arterxerxes is put up, and the auctioneer exhausts his eloquence in praising that celebrated hunter. He praises Jorrocks also, prompted here when necessary by that gentleman himself; there are violent scenes between the two, much passing

of strong language from Pigg and the M.F.H. to sneering spectators come to criticise faults—a sort of "general post" of abuse all round—and the hammer is raised for the last time to knock the horse down at twenty-five guineas, probably all he was worth in spite of his great "cut 'em down" qualities: "going for the last time!" And then the seller's conscience smites him for what he is about to do,—part with the old horse which had carried him more — or less — triumphantly through many a happy day,—and he blurts out "three 'underd!" and ruins the sale. Again—at the risk of wearying by the repetition of the idea—how often are these words rapped out by wags, or would-be wags, at modern auction marts: how often the quoting of them, and little sayings like to them, must recall to Australian squatters and toilers round Hudson Bay the sodden furrows and far-stretching pastures and leafless woodlands about their old English homes.

"Binjimin" is one of the humbler immortals: who but the originator of Jorrocks would ever have thought of turning this impudent Cockney into a whip, and who except Leech could have drawn him for us exactly as we knew he must have looked? He has a strange and somewhat difficult career—from the time he rides down the street of Handley Cross crying out "Lob-ster-r! fine lob-ster-r-r!" and the Poll Parrot merchant indulges "in fright-

ful faces and an unknown tongue," to his last and most unfortunate appearance on the stage. Space fails us to do justice to this unamiable youth; he gives himself far too many airs, and quite properly suffers for his conceit and bumptiousness. He is always catching it; his master cold-pigs him when he lies slug-a-bed, and when he complains of gout, so that he may get off going out hunting, is very angry, and threatens to "stuff him full of Hunter's pills." "Boy has no passion for the chase," says Mr Jorrocks. He comes into unpleasant contact with the stalwart Betsey. And on the very last page of 'Handley Cross' his career ends in a wild tumult of howls, when the virtuous Pigg, having detected him not only racing his master's horses with another imp of the same calibre, but refreshing himself with the latter's marmalade, administers heavy punishment to him with a cutting whip.

The Earl of Scamperdale and Jack Spraggon occupy a prominent position in 'Soapey Sponge.' The peer was always a thorn in the latter's side, but now and then self-interest causes Jack to work in with the slippery gentleman from London, and once they became literary collaborators. They are a nice couple, this nobleman and his jackal, and yet most people who know them have a sneaking kind of liking for them. Leech's

pictures of them are always delightful; look at the little vignette heading chapter twenty-four, where the Earl is shown riding full-tilt at the initial letter, and at the wood-cut a few pages further on, where they are sitting over the fire in their miserable smoking-room. Another cut shows them parting for the night, Lord Scamperdale with a cheerful countenance, having just arranged that his companion shall on the morrow set about a rather shabby bit of work, and Jack looks unutterable things as he marches off with his cauliflower-headed candlestick.

The chief benefit which Jack Spraggon conferred on posterity was performed when he sat down with Sponge in that bedroom at Hanby House to take his part in concocting the immortal account of the run with Mr Puffington's hounds. Look at, and study a little, if you please, the sketch which shows him in his arm-chair, dictating to his colleague what to write. If this chapter and the one following it are not genuine bits of comedy it is hard to say what comedy is; for men who hunt they contain almost as many quotations as the "Rape of the Lock" or "Gray's Elegy" to a professor of poetry.

Both these men—Jack and his lordship—were keen sportsmen, and it is to this, we suspect, any tenderness we may feel for them is due. If in

addition to their bad points, their sad want of any kind of ordinary morality, they had been cowards as regards the chief occupation of their lives, no one could, to use an old and expressive word, have stomached them. And we are the more convinced of the truth of this reasoning, as applied to the other characters in the novels as well as to the dwellers at Woodmansterne, because we think it will be found on careful examination that we have a liking, or an affection, for various bad men who are genuine in this one business—hunting—and a contempt of, often running into hatred and even loathing for, a much greater number of bad men who are pretentious cowards, and certainly not good at anything at all.

If Sponge had lived more in the country, and not been obliged to devote so much time to his beloved Moggs, he might have been a better man. And perhaps not: Facey was completely bucolic; he had rural tastes; he could fish and shoot—witness that right-and-left at partridges with Jogglebury Crowdey; "It was that confounded mountain ash in the way," he thought on another occasion when he missed his second woodcock—and yet there could hardly be a greater rascal. Possibly if we had had his opportunities, or lack of them, we might have managed no better: nearly all the people he had to do with were rogue or fools;

Mr Stanley Sterling is the one solitary figure in his crowded memoirs who can be called a gentleman.

If Romford had been as decent a man as he was capable as a huntsman, he would have been very nearly a perfect character; he was far more scrupulous in regard to his dealings with foxes than with his fellow-creatures, with whom he was not scrupulous at all; he was, we are told, "a fair-dealing man and not at all inclined to take advantage of an overmatched animal."

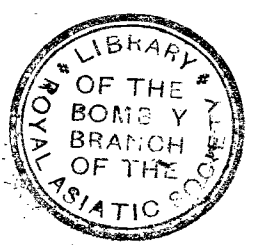
We are sometimes tempted to regret that Mr Surtees did not devote more space to purely hunting and shooting matters; there is indeed very little about the latter in the novels. No man could describe a countryside better than he did; there are a hundred little touches scattered through them which show us his power in this way: the ill-disposed, chasing sheep-dog, the crows following the line of the doomed fox, the description of the storm on the "werry windy day"—it almost makes one chilly to read it,—the smugglers, the gipsy fence-stealers, the wood-cutters met with in the forest, the drench of rain on the bye-day, bring up vividly before us in a line or two what we are meant to see. He is quite at his best when he is talking of hunting and all that is connected with it, or pertains to it; of foxes and horses and

their riders, of dealers and huntsmen, and rural matters generally: one is apt to get a little tired of long descriptions of shams like the Watkin family, and the Hazeys and Mulleygrubs, and of their plottings and entertainments and hollow ostentation.

Charles Kingsley says somewhere that Surtees might have done better than he did; we cannot quote the passage, but we think he meant that, with his advantages, his position, and his knowledge of the world and of all country things, and his sense of humour, the Durham squire should "have gone further," have taken a higher view of the little world he created. No doubt there is nothing accomplished by mortals so well that it might not be improved, but many of us would be inclined to hesitate about risking anything here if it was possible to risk it. In the language of a golfer who makes a good but not perfect shot, we "would not take them back," would not run the chance of having these novels re-written, supposing their author, with added experience, had thought of casting away his first MSS. and trying his hand on the same subjects again. An expurgated edition of the Handley Cross novels would be almost as appalling as a bowdlerised Shakespeare. We have read them with keen gusto and satisfaction ever since we were able to read

any novels, and can hardly look forward to a time when they will become stale, or cease to delight. They have given great and innocent pleasure to many thousands of people for fully two generations, and we rejoice to think that they seem long likely to continue to do so.

THE END.

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